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THE

MISTAKES OF A LIFE.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MRS. J. HUBBACK,

AUTHOR OF "THE WIFE'S SISTER," "THE OLD VICARAGE," &c.

VOL. I.

London:
T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following tale was written some years ago, before Italy and Italian patriots had excited so noisy a sympathy in England. The Authoress begs to assure her readers, that it is not intended to express her opinions either for or against the "Friends of Italy and Freedom."

Hamilton Square,
Birkenhead, Dec. 1st, 1862.

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THE MISTAKES OF A LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"Oh, thou voice within my heart,
Why entreat me, why upbraid me?
When the steadfast tongues of truth,
And the flattering hopes of youth,
Have all denied me, and betrayed me?"

THE GOLDEN LEGEND.

THE mistakes of a life! What a concentration of bitter and humiliating thought in those few words; what aching, hopeless regret! Oh, to call back the vanished years, and act again the part so badly played, remedy the evils so blindly incurred, attain, perchance, the good so nearly won, so constantly lost through error or miscalculation!

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Yes, it is a bitter thing to stand where I do on the road of life, the dreary point of middle age, and to look back on the bright years of youth, lost, vanished, without bringing the good which they seemed to promise, or presenting it only in mockery, because it was evil in disguise; to remember not a single dream of hope realized, to recall no pleasure won, to hold no content secured. And then to know that every day carries me farther from the unfulfilled delights of youth, the spring of hope; and hurries me nearer and nearer to the dark hours of age, yet leaves ever the restless craving and unsatisfied longing.

And is there nothing left? nothing, not even a friend to listen to my complainings? Yet let me try to live over again the vanished incidents of life, and to show that if I have erred, I have been cruelly wronged, that my unhappiness was not my fault alone.

I was the second of four children; the eldest, a son, bore my mother's maiden name of

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Stuart; he was two years my senior; I had hardly passed twelvemonths when Edward was born, and three years afterwards came little Grace.

I do not know by what caprice it happened, whether springing from affection for me, or a mistrust of my parent's prudence, and pity for an unportioned girl, but when I was three years old, my father's great aunt, who had a large fortune, resolved to settle it all on me; and dying soon afterwards, I became an heiress at four years old, with every prospect which a lengthened minority could give of a great accumulation of wealth.

The excellent old lady had taken wise precaution that the wealth she left me should be all my own, and whilst making a liberal allowance to provide for education, attendants, and other necessaries, she decided by her will that I was not to enjoy the main portion of the income until I had attained the age of three and twenty. Nor was I to marry before that age, under penalty of forfeiting one half

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of my future property, which, in that case, would go to a distant relative, whilst the remainder was to be strictly tied up for the benefit of myself and my children. By this means she hoped to guard me against insinuating fortune-hunters, to secure to me the use of my senses, and time to decide ere I took the step so often the first in the shipwreck of life, the irrevocable bond of matrimony. Excellent old lady! little did you foresee that all the enjoyment of your wealth to which I ever attained, was in perspective, ere it was really mine, and that every measure you had planned for my security, tended only to contravert your intentions.

My home was a dear and pleasant place, and the shadows of bright, innocent joys are still called up as I retrace it.

An Elizabethan house, of rich time-stained brick, with stone mullions and coignes, an old deep porch, a hall with tall oriel windows, twice the height of the other apartments, galleries, staircases, odd corners without end,

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standing on a lawn of real English turf, soft smooth, green, rolling away with a graceful sweep to the long avenue of limes and chestnuts on one side, and the open park, with its coppice, its knolls, its groves, and stately, solitary trees on the other. Behind, to the north and west of the house, rose a steep hill, whose foot was cut into terraced walks, planted in the days of King William, with formal rows of yews and juniper, cypress and other dark evergreens; and lower in the valley, bounding the park, and of course out of sight of the house, in the usual taste of our ancestors, swept a pretty river, broad and smooth, and gliding like that of Longfellow's own fancy. Here my father and mother lived, with far more regard to appearances than prudence; and here we all grew up; I in the happy consciousness that my future wealth entitled me to every indulgence, and my brothers with a perfect recklessness, so common to young men, as to what the consequences might be of their lavish expenditure; an entire uncon-

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sciousness that a day of reckoning would come, when they would have to pay with compound interest for the pleasures now enjoyed without a thought.

I suppose there was not within the realms of King George, an easier or more indulgent couple than my father and mother; nor a more careless, selfishly happy, and elegantly luxurious set of young people than ourselves. And foremost in every indulgence, first in every scheme of expense, gaiety, or fashion, as we were first in age, importance, and beauty, were Stuart and myself.

It would not have been easy either to find a handsomer pair. It is useless, perhaps to dwell on my own personal advantages; the reflection which I see in the glass now, is so different, so faded, so sad a shadow of what I once saw there, that few would guess how great the change had been.

Yet I think our characters were so greatly influenced by the knowledge of our personal attractions, that these cannot be considered

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unimportant. I do not remember the time when I was not conscious of my own beauty, or when to be ugly, was not spoken of by me and my brothers, as the most terrible misfortune. A serious speculation in our childhood was what we should have done, had I possessed the wide mouth, the common-place eyes, or the muddy complexion of some of our acquaintance; and Stuart solemnly assured me that in such miserable circumstances he would never have owned me as a relation.

Nor were these ideas ever checked by those around us; my mother was as proud of our beauty as we were, or nearly so, and my father laughed at our conceit, in a tone which implied that he thought our ideas at least as clever as they were vain.

Next to my own charms, I certainly valued Stuart's. I was intensely proud of him. There was no one to compare with him for figure and features in the neighbourhood. No one who could so handle a bat, sit a horse, draw a bow, skate, shoot, or dance. But my

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particular glory, and his especial vanity, was his driving four-in-hand. Never did anyone so gather up the reins, or lay out the long lash of his whip across his leaders, with such gentle, high-bred grace, with such elegant ease. That he should have the box-seat, and take the reins from the coachman, and that in consequence the London coach should arrive two hours before its time, was as much a matter of proud rejoicing to me, as it was of inconvenience to the individuals who were thereby too late that day for the stage.

So far as mental accomplishments went, Stuart had nothing particular to boast of. He went to school and college like other boys; but distinguished himself only as an idle, good-natured, dashing fellow, at the first; and as to the latter, his wild feats nearly brought him the honour of rustication.

I daresay it was only a small part of his college exploits that I knew, but I was extremely proud of every instance of contempt of authority, every rebellious or vexatious act,

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every clever deception, or well acted lie which did come to my knowledge. I thought it all highly chivalrous and noble, and mentally compared my brother to the gallant knights of old; whilst deans and proctors, doctors and heads of colleges, en masse, stood for the personification of tyranny and oppression; against which it was noble to struggle, and whom it was honourable to outwit.

If Stuart had any great abilities, he certainly never exerted them; but I rather suspect he had not; I don't think we were a clever family. But we did very well without it. We were handsome, high-born, and insolent; proud of our position and fortune; haughty to our equals, valuing little besides birth, fortune, and beauty, full of animal spirits, prompting the ready flippancy, which with us passed for wit, and voting all but a most select and confined circle, as tiresome frumps, or absurd quizzes, fit only to afford matter for our captious and conceited criticism, our satirical laugh, or saucy sneer.

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Such qualities of course, did not make us popular, but for all that, we were courted and propitiated by those who must have most disliked us in secret. People are often taken at their own valuation, if they are able to proclaim it loud enough, and the world in general has not sufficient self-respect to avoid coveting what is withheld.

In later years I have wondered we were even tolerated, with our scornful airs, and absurd caprices; but the neighbourhood, seeing our beauty and station, believed all the rest of our self-assertions to be equally well founded, and all were anxious to be thought on good terms with us, I daresay, because they could not easily succeed.

It seemed to me then, the natural spirit of admiration of us, and appreciation of our worth; now I read it otherwise, and see that our faults were tolerated by those admitted to our society, not for our own sake, but for theirs. They bore with our insolence, to spare their own pride the mortification of being supposed our inferiors.

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Vain and foolish as I was in many things, I was not so foolish as to despise elegant accomplishments, or the labour necessary to acquire them. I had a governess—so she was called—but in reality I governed her, and consequently, our school-room was peaceful and pleasant enough. I had necessary masters also, and acquired considerable skill in music, dancing, and one or two modern languages.

My sweet sister Grace, although four years younger, was, however, much my superior; and, whilst I had learnt only to excel and dazzle, she had studied for the sake of what she should really gain by knowledge.

Indeed, I ought to say that the bad features in the portrait I have drawn, apply almost exclusively to Stuart and myself. Edward, from not being eldest, had early discovered it was necessary to yield in some things; he was to have a profession, so he studied a little, passed decently through his examinations, and incurred only moderate debts at college. At home, too, he was somewhat different. Self-

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engrossed and selfish, certainly, vain and thoughtless, yet he was not so boldly and invariably self-willed as we were; he sometimes hesitated at saying an unkind thing, or doing a rude one, however witty or funny they might be; and although applauding Stuart and myself in our eccentricities, had qualms of conscience about imitating them.

And as to Grace, I am sure I don't know where she learnt her ideas, or how she picked up her principles; but they were very different from mine as I early discovered. At first I thought it arose from difference in age, prospects, or personal attractions; for although Grace was a very pretty girl, she was not to be compared with me for brilliancy of beauty. You had to look at her two or three times, and catch her expression, before you were even sure of her being pretty. I supposed goodness came naturally to Grace, when I grew older; for then I could not deny to myself that she was much more amiable than I was. Dear Grace, I loved her with all my

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heart; all the better because she was neither so rich, nor so pretty as I was; and to do my sisterly partiality justice, there was no advantage of instruction, and scarcely any of dress or attendance, which my own fortune secured to me, which I would not willingly share with her. I have no idea now that I paid for these things; certainly it cost me no sacrifice of any luxurious indulgence; but then, if I had not thought of it, perhaps nobody else would; and, at the time, I believed it the very height of devoted sisterly affection.

Just as I was nineteen, I took a fancy to go on the Continent. Our governess was gone, and Grace, of course, had not finished her education; whilst it seemed doubtful whether my parents would re-establish the schoolroom. I had come out (as young ladies say) a year before, but my mother's health was too uncertain to allow her to encounter a London season; and I suspect my father's finances were declining like her health. He did sometimes look grave, and observe that

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"two sons were a great expense." So my time had been spent in our own country.

The restriction on me regarding marrying, had at first but slightly impressed me, but now that I was old enough to consider the subject, it made me uneasy to suppose that I must pass five years in our country neighbourhood before I could improve my situation. Five years! why in that time all our acquaintance would be weary of seeing me as Miss Moore; I should have lost all the charm of novelty. I should have become an old maid. It seemed to me a most stupid restriction on my liberty, since where it was known, it would certainly act the part of dragon to the Hesperian Garden, for who would think it worth while to woo one who could not be wedded for so long a period.

I should have minded it less, had I been meanwhile permitted to enter into possession of my fortune; or had the peculiarity of the settlement been less universally known. As it was, I ascribed to this fact the circumstance,

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that at nineteen I had not one admirer whom I would have wished converted into a lover, except for the pleasure and triumph of refusing him; nor did I number amongst all my acquaintance, a single individual whom I could assure my self-love would afford me such a gratification.

Looking back now on the state of things at that time, I am inclined to judge differently, and rather imagine that the insolence of my beauty-airs, the egotistic contempt of my general conduct, and the satirical humour in which I indulged at every one's expense, together with my undisguised wishes to win a title and wear a coronet, were the real causes of my unpopularity amongst my equals,—the real preventive to my receiving addresses from any who could have hoped to win me.

Be that as it might, my feelings prompted me to try a little variety, and I resolved to go abroad. Stuart and I ruled the house as we pleased, and we agreed on this point. My father made no opposition, only stipulating

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for leave to let our house, and although at first we demurred, on farther consideration we agreed to this plan. We were to find a tenant, if we could, for Cheslyn Grange, and go to the Continent towards the end of the summer.

In those days it was a much more serious undertaking to go to Italy, France, or the Rhine, than modern travellers can have the least idea of; and also being a much more aristocratic thing to do, we thought a great deal more of ourselves in consequence of our intentions.

My poor mother, indeed, I fear rather dreaded the whole thing; she was not very equal to the necessary exertion, and was afraid of a sea voyage. I argued with her again and again, to try and make her like the plan, for I did not feel comfortable at the air of martyrdom which she wore; and I wanted to persuade her, as well as myself, that it was not only the best but the pleasantest arrangement.

She yielded the one meekly, but I could

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see that she would not adopt the other idea, and it provoked me that she would not view it with my eyes and feelings.

"Mamma will like it better than she expects," said Grace, who was charmed with the prospect herself; "it will improve her health, I hope, and then her spirits will improve too. But we must wait for that; so, suppose, Henrietta dear, you were not to try to convince her against her will; she says she knows it is all right, and by and bye she will find it pleasant."

Stuart and Edward both declared Grace was right, and I tried after that to be more silent on the subject; only arguing now and then, when they were none of them by to check me.

Much of the summer passed before we heard of a desirable tenant, but at last a correspondence was opened with the Agent by a Lady Suffield, which seemed to promise well.

She was the widow of a G.C.B., and a woman of large fortune, with two daughters

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unmarried, and an only son just of age. It was exactly the sort of thing for us; the dowager and her daughters would not shoot like a set of men, said my father; would not ill-treat the furniture like a parcel of children, said my mother; would not eclipse us either in beauty or fashion, said I; probably they are stupid old hum-drums, who have no ideas beyond the East Indies, and the H.E.I.C.S.

We were so anxious to go abroad, that we were inclined to make the best of any decent offer; and really, so far as we could learn, this seemed unexceptionable. We pretended indeed to despise, or at least to hold very cheap the rank and title of these new comers, and to look on their wealth even as a degradation.

"A trumpery knight's widow" was the way in which we designated her. "I wonder how he got his title; perhaps by a series of good dinners to the Prince Regent! Thank Heaven papa was never unfortunately knighted. I should not have survived such a disgrace."

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"Disgrace," repeated my sister, "what if it had been won by some honourable action."

"My dear Grace," said I, "a title could not add to our family honor; that is, not a mere knighthood; who cares for a new creation?"

"I thought you liked rank," observed my mother, "I am sure, Henrietta, I have heard you say fifty times you would be a peeress if you could!"

"Oh yes, rank, real aristocracy, a fine old title, handed down through many generations; but that is quite a different thing. There is some real glory in being descended from a line of Barons, Earls, and Marquises; but a new made knight makes one sick!"

"If it was not fairly won, perhaps so," said Grace, "but otherwise surely a little honor a man has earned for himself is a greater distinction than any ready-made rank which he was born to, and no thanks to him."

"I know exactly what Lady Suffield will

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be like," said I, without attending to her, "and how she will conduct herself. She will be for ever pushing herself out of all the drawing-rooms, next after Lady Anne Awdrey, and insisting on her right of precedence over all the untitled aristocracy of the country. When great wealth and little rank meet in one person, they must form just such a compound as soda-water."

Notwithstanding the disgust with which I talked of the Suffields, and the contempt Stuart and I affected for these unknown persons, I was ready enough to second a determination of his, to invite the young man to the Grange for a day or two, that he might have time and opportunity to look about him, and make up his mind to the agreement.

We heard that Mr. Suffield was to be in the neighbourhood for a short time, and my brother suddenly suggested this plan. My parents made a little opposition; my mother was afraid people would think it odd, and perhaps imprudent.

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"My dear mama," said I, "if people have not left off by this time thinking anything we do odd, they must be incurable blockheads. The Moores of Cheslyn Grange never have been, and never will be tied down to the narrow limits of their neighbour's understandings; nor shall our actions be circumscribed by the fear of their verdicts. If Stuart likes to ask this young man, I see no objection!"

"Oh very well," said mama submissively.

"But, children," interposed my father, "if you ask him here, and then treat him in the careless, scornful way in which you usually behave, it will hardly do: that is if you want him to take the house, you really must make up your minds to be civil for once."

"Very well, sir," replied Stuart, "I'll try what I can do. I dare say, however, he will be no great judge of manners, so perhaps if I do my best, I may pass for a gentleman."

"He's not going to take us with the

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Grange," said I scornfully, "and were we to leave our manners to be let with it, he would not probably know what to do with them, however elegant they might be."

"If you do not engage to behave properly, Henrietta," said my father, "positively Mr. Suffield shall not come here."

"My dear papa, one would think I was an ogress! oh I'll be very proper, only you see I must not be too winning, or may be, instead of taking the lease, the poor young man may follow us to Naples, on a hopeless love chase."

"I dare say you might do worse than encourage such a chase, and then it need not be hopeless," suggested papa provokingly. "But from past experience, I should not say the danger of such a category was imminent."

"I encourage him—this *bourgeois-gentilhomme!* You are too good to suggest such an idea. Pray ask him, Stuart, by all means, and let me act on papa's advice at once. So you

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think I should have no chance of winning his admiration!"

I went up to a glass, and shook out my long curls, and glanced at my graceful figure, and bright eyes with triumph.

Accordingly Mr. Suffield was asked to come to the Grange; and a sort of excuse made about settling the terms: I forget exactly how the business was arranged; Stuart saw him first, and teazed me by refusing to describe him, or giving absurd rhodomontades about his appearance, from which I could gather nothing.

He came however himself at last. How well I remember the day, the hour, the scene where we met.

It was a lovely summer afternoon; we were all out in the lime avenue, practising archery, just then the rage, and to which we devoted ourselves. Even at this distance of time I can recollect that my appearance must have been peculiarly picturesque and piquante. It was the fashion to wear a costume at our

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archery meetings, of which the most striking part was a pretty hat and plume of feathers, something like those worn by cavaliers in King Charles' time; and I really do not believe the looped-up hat would have displayed a more lovely face than mine, seek if you would through the whole county.

We must have formed a pretty group. My two brothers, such fine young men, Grace in her white muslin and green ribbands, looking like a fairy, exercise and excitement having brought more than usual animation to her eyes, and a deeper shade of pink to her fair cheek. She was tall and slender, her girlish figure certainly deserved her name; but her manners had a touch of bashfulness peculiarly striking, compared to my self-possession, and her features had a youthful look, an elegant *petitesse*, which won for her the soubriquet of 'little' which her height did not justify. I need not dwell on my own attractions; but I do not think you could have easily matched our group for beauty; and when you fancy us

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four young persons standing under the gothic arch of that magnificent lime avenue, and imagine the play of light and shade, the contrast of giant vegetable bulk and age, with the moving figures beneath, so full of juvenile symmetry and springing vivacity, with all the picturesque accompaniments of bows and arrows, belts and quivers, to give a graceful peculiarity to the whole, you might long have tried ere you would have produced a more striking effect to the eye of a stranger.

Nor was I insensible or indifferent to this; however I might affect impertinent and absurd contempt for our visitor, I was secretly anxious to impress his eye and win his admiration. Homage was an object to me; I was never tired of exciting, or receiving it, and I looked on the arrival of Mr. Suffield as an opening to exercise the power of my beauty.

His appearance surprised and confused me, I had so constantly pictured him to myself as a robust and ruddy specimen of a beef-

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eating English plebeian, that I was positively startled at the contrast. He was rather tall, slender, and certainly elegant; his face was good, although his features were not regularly handsome; pale and fair, but with deep eyes which had a grave earnest way of looking straight into one's own, as if impatient to read one's thoughts, but quite indifferent about one's external appearance. There was a look of refinement, of gentleness, of truthfulness in his face which for a moment abashed me. I felt, as I met the quiet questioning of his eyes, as if he were calling me to account for all the insolent witticisms I had been indulging in at his and his family's expense, and I really hardly dared to raise my own; I never was so much embarrassed in my life, and he must have seen it too!

He turned to Grace, and was introduced to her; my eyes followed him; angry at the appearance of rustic bashfulness which I must have worn, I shook it off, and watched him speak to my sister. Grace was too young to

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be 'come out,' but she had never been kept back at all, as some girls are; and her manners were a delightful mixture of the *retenue* of a modest child, and the ease of a well-bred woman. There was no affectation of demureness at one time, contrasting with rude and boisterous unreserve at another, such as I have seen in many girls; she never thought about herself, it is true, and yet she never forgot that she was a lady.

Her bright frank brow seemed never dimmed by a cloud of self-consciousness, or self-conceit; she took the attentions offered her at any time, with the same ease with which she resigned them; she had not learnt to blush at the looks of admiration bestowed on her, for she had not learnt to notice them; and although she enjoyed society, I really believe it was without a thought of anything personal, except a wish to improve herself.

Allowing Mr. Suffield time to say what was civil to Grace, for I disdained to hurry myself, I soon called back his attention by asking if he

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would not join in our amusement, we could easily provide him with necessary implements, my brothers had several bows at his service.

He declined however, declaring himself too idle for such exertion.

"Besides," added he, "it would compel me to give most of my attention to the target, and I want to look about me, and make myself acquainted with the beauties of this charming place!"

I was drawing my bow as he spoke, with my eyes fixed on the mark, but I dropped my arms for a moment, and turned towards him to make some laughing answer to what I had imagined intended for a compliment; but found to my surprise that his face was averted, and he was gazing very intently up the valley, where the winding stream formed such a striking feature in the landscape. I resumed my aim, as if I had not noticed him, sent my arrow into the target with a sting which had something corresponding to my feelings

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in it, and then turning again, said with mild suavity—

"Is the scenery new to you?"

He answered in the affirmative.

"Ah, to those to whom our English Park scenery is unfamiliar, it must be striking."

"I wonder you can leave it," said he, still gazing away at the distance. "Do you expect to meet with anything you will like better abroad?"

"Perhaps not, but everything there will have the same charm to us that this place has to you—novelty! Grandeur, and position, and importance only enchant whilst they are new. When you have tried them as long as *we* have, you may perhaps value them as we do."

To this day I can remember the peculiar expression with which Mr. Suffield turned his eyes from the landscape, and looked me directly in the face. He seemed to be weighing my words, and mentally questioning the motive which prompted this speech. A very

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slight shade of colour flushed his forehead for a moment, a something almost indicative of angry surprise clouded his deep eyes; but it was gone again so instantly that I half-fancied I was mistaken, and that my insolent speech was beyond his comprehension and feeling.

We were crossing to the other target a moment after, and instead of replying, he occupied himself stepping the distance, observing that it seemed unusually far for ladies to shoot; and then offering politely to collect our arrows. I exclaimed against his touching mine; unless he were accustomed to draw them out, they would certainly snap short at the head, and I never trusted any one to handle them.

What evil genius possessed me to say such things. I saw a moment after that he was quite at home with them, and that his eye was as quick as his hand was careful, for he selected Grace's arrows in a moment, and abstained from touching mine; yet I knew only one accustomed to them would thus at once

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have recognised the difference in make and feather between our sets, so slight and little apparent to an unartistic eye.

At this moment we saw a carriage passing the end of the avenue towards the house. We knew it to belong to some neighbours of ours, and I pointed it out to my brothers.

"There come the tiresome Burrowes! I hope they will not be let in. Mr. Suffield," added I, turning suddenly to him, "I trust you despise *parvenus* as much as I do!"

"I could not venture to answer without understanding two things more accurately," said he quietly, "the measure of your contempt, and the exact nature of the object. What is the crime of a *parvenu*, will you define it?"

"A man or woman, who having made money in some low way, thinks he or she is thereby entitled to a place in society, and claims to be equal to his or her betters."

"Betters, in what respect?" enquired he.

"Oh in every respect, fortune, rank, birth,

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station; whatever one values most. A *parvenu* is a creature not gentle by birth, who claims the privileges of gentle blood in right of money, and money alone! money without manners."

"Does gentle birth always confer gentle manners," said he pointedly.

I felt myself blush, and was angry at my weakness.

"But those Burrowes are so very vulgar," said I, to escape from the subject. "Why, he made all his money by some business in the north. Made it himself as a wool-stapler."

"Indeed!" replied Mr. Suffield.

"And he is so ugly; he squints I believe, and has a snub nose," continued I.

"Did he make his face as well as his fortune in the north, Miss Moore?" said Mr. Suffield, with some emphasis.

I was again disconcerted, what an odd man he was!

Turning to Stuart he added, as if he did not

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bestow another thought on his question, or at all expect an answer,

"Has this gentleman been long resident in your neighbourhood?"

Stuart told him it was about six years since he settled here, adding carelessly, "he's a good enough sort of a man, I assure you; every body likes him except such whimsical and fantastic girls as Henrietta. She can bear nothing but what is perfect in every way."

"Because," pursued Mr. Suffield, passing by a fair opening for a compliment which most men would have thought themselves obliged to pay me, "I used, when I was a boy, to hear a good deal about a gentleman of that name, who was connected with a large firm in the north, and I should like to know if it be the same."

"Do you wish to go and see," said Stuart, "now's your time."

"I should not recognise him; I was a boy

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at the time I speak of, but I confess I should be glad if it prove so."

"It would be pleasant no doubt to Lady Suffield to meet an acquaintance when she comes to this neighbourhood," said I, thinking we should find out something of their antecedents.

"My mother did not know him, probably even by name. I was under the care of an uncle at the time, whilst my parents were in India," was his reply. "But Mr. Burrowes was so highly esteemed, and so well deserved it, that I should think his acquaintance a great advantage."

"Mr. Burrowes, of Mount Place," said Grace "is a most excellent man to the poor, and very useful I believe every where about. Papa says he is a very good magistrate."

"They must have been let in," observed Edward, "or their carriage would have been back by this time. And as I live, here comes one of the servants to summon somebody.

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What could the heads of departments be thinking of?"

"I shall not go in," said I, decidedly, "I shall tell Benjamin to say I am not to be found."

"And give him a dispensation for the falsehood," observed our visitor in an under tone.

"But they must have seen us," urged Grace at the same moment, "and it really will be so rude, dear Henrietta; I wish I could go in for you."

"Well, I will send word I am engaged," said I, ashamed to persist in my first assertion, yet not yielding graciously. "People should not be so tiresome, calling when one does not want them. How glad I shall be when you are old enough to help me, Grace."

The servant brought a message that my father particularly wished Stuart to go in, I was not sent for, rather to my surprise. He went, and I accompanied him a little way to suggest that he might take the opportunity of

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discovering from Mr. Burrowes, supposing he were really the person Mr. Suffield imagined, who our proposed tenant was, and what had been his rank in life.

We spent the rest of the afternoon, I believe, sauntering about the grounds; I was tired of shooting, that is, I was cross; and Edward suggested our showing the place to Mr. Suffield.

I had never seen anybody like this young man before, and although he irritated my vanity, he excited my interest. He did not seem to admire me, neither his eyes nor his tongue paid me compliments, and he was perpetually intimating that he thought me wrong, in a way which was quite new. Positively I believe he was the first young man I had ever met who had not been so struck at his introduction by my beauty, as to have expressed his sense of it at least in looks. But Mr. Suffield was much more occupied by the prospects, the green-houses, the stables, and the woods.

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I was vexed at all this; for however much I had pretended to consider his expected admiration as impertinence, it seemed to me much more impertinent not to admire me at all. And after what papa had said too! it was too provoking.

We got nothing out of Mr. Burrowes to elucidate his history; the old gentleman knew nothing about him or his uncle, unless indeed, as he suggested, his uncle were a General St. John who was a man of high family, and great wealth, and who certainly had connections in India. But it was not probable, we thought, that a man allied to half the noble families in the north, could be the uncle in question; so we gave up that idea.

All the next morning Mr. Suffield, papa, and the steward, were busy together, and it was not till luncheon time that we met; for the gentlemen were out before I came down to breakfast, as very often happened.

My father proposed our riding in the after-

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noon to show Mr. Suffield the country. I did not accede at once, having a wish to make him press me. I almost think he must have guessed my motive and resolved to thwart it, for he said not a word; even when I declined going altogether, it seemed a matter of indifference; he only gave me one of those thoughtful looks which provoked me so. Grace went with my father and our visitor, and came back more pleased with him than I ever remember to have seen her about any body. Her girlish raptures amused me; I set them down as partly ignorance, and partly easiness of disposition. She was always ready to like every body.

I observed however, that Mr. Suffield took a good deal of notice of her, during the rest of the visit, and that they found many more subjects of mutual interest to talk about, than I could have expected would exist between them.

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CHAPTER II.

"Long years ago
I wandered as a youth among its bowers,
And never from my heart has faded quite
Its memory, that like a summer sunset
Encircles with a ring of purple light
All the horizon of my youth."

GOLDEN LEGEND.

LADY SUFFIELD took Cheslyn Grange for three years, and we went abroad. We found out after the visit from the son, that it was only the mother and daughters who were to reside there constantly. Mr. Suffield had property of his own in another county, but the house was bad and old, and he wanted to rebuild it. It came out, too, that they were really people of good family, that his father had held a high official situation in India, and one or two

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other Government appointments; and that General St. John was his uncle.

No wonder he had looked at me with some surprise, when I insinuated that wealth and consequence were novelties to him: I was more inclined to marvel that he should have known and remembered Mr. Burrows. In his situation I should have made a point of forgetting him.

I am not going to enter into details regarding our tour abroad. Like everything else in this world, it had its pleasures and its pains. Plenty of worries and vexations, but looking back on them they seem bright days now!

I acquired a great taste for foreign manners, foreign gallantry, foreign dress, and language. Italy, especially, was my delight, and everything Italian. Grace and I had an Italian master whilst we were at Florence—a priest, a remarkably pleasant and intelligent man, and his conversations on many subjects besides Dante or Manzoni were my greatest pleasure. Grace liked him the first winter as

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much as I did, but the second time we engaged him, she took rather an aversion to him. I do not know why, but she mistrusted his fluent language, and gave him less credit for sincerity than I did.

But two years abroad quite wore out the patience of my father, and nothing would prevent his coming home. Perhaps if Stuart had been more with us, he might have been better satisfied; but Stuart and Edward were wandering all over the continent during the vacations of the latter, or amusing themselves at Brighton or in London, not after the most economical fashion.

The most memorable event of our sojourn abroad, was a short visit from Mr. Suffield, and one of his sisters. We were at Genoa when they came there, and we met. Either he was improved by the soft Italian air, or his English bluntness was refreshing from being English, for I found him as interesting, and more agreeable, than at home. I rather think sincerity and calmness were his charms, for I

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had imbibed nearly as much admiration and flattery as I could enjoy, and was really sometimes tired of empty compliments.

It was very pleasant to see the Suffields, for reasons not entirely personal. We liked to hear of our old home; every little thing connected with the Grange was full of home feelings, and we were interested in the walnut tree blown down in a November gale, or the depredations of the peacock amongst the kitchen gardens.

"And did the Mayers come up and dance on the lawn on Old May Day?" enquired Grace, eagerly. "I hope they will not leave off that pretty custom."

Mr. Suffield informed them that the first year they had been surprised by a visit from the troop of Mayers, and that nobody had known what to do with them. He had been from home at the time, and his mother had only sent them some money and begged them go away. He added something about if he had known she cared, he would have been there, or done

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something,—a speech which rather surprised me at the time for its gallantry; but which on consideration I set down to his good-natured concern for Grace's girlish feelings.

I believe this visit had a good deal to do with my father's impatience to get home; he began talking of England from that time; and then just as the second summer was drawing to a close, he heard that Fairy Hill was vacant, so he suddenly resolved to take it for a year; and accordingly told us to prepare for our return.

Fairy Hill was a pretty, modern villa, belonging to my father now, but which had been built by a retired citizen, on a small piece of ground adjoining the park. It was large enough for us, so far as rooms were concerned, although a very different style of residence from the Grange; but we had always despised it, as a cockney affair, and it hurt my feelings to think of living there, though only for a year, almost within sight of our own home. It would look as if we were reduced in

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circumstances, and had to economise, I suggested, to which my father replied that if we were to realize the one, we should not be in danger of the other—a speech I did not like.

Home we came, and located ourselves at Fairy Hill, wondering much how the world would look from this new point of view; and a little what people would say of us.

We wanted to hear that we had been missed, and hoped to discover that the Suffields had by no means filled our place, or taken our position in society. Also, I was rather curious to know what people generally would think of our condescending to live in so small a house, and was inclined to expect a vote of thanks for coming among them again on any terms, as if we did it for their benefit and pleasure.

My thoughts, and the thoughts of the whole family, were forcibly turned away from selfish vanities, or any other personal consideration, by a domestic trial; before we were well settled at Fairy Hill, Grace became seriously

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indisposed. We had experienced extremely rough weather in our passage across the channel, and she had been at the moment, the only one who did not seem to suffer from it; but after landing, she looked pale, and complained of her head. The excitement of coming home, however, kept her up for a time, and instead of resting, she over-exerted herself in the heat to a most imprudent degree. A violent fever came on, and for some days her life was despaired of; her sufferings were dreadful, but youthful strength conquered; the fever was subdued, and we were beginning to rejoice in her restoration, when a terrible calamity announced itself. She had become totally blind!

Whilst her life had seemed wavering in the balance, we had wished to retain her at any cost, and I am not speaking from mistaken self-appreciation, when I say, I would gladly have sacrificed my whole fortune to have restored my sister. My wild prayers for her recovery—selfish, wayward, rebellious prayers

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—were incessant; so was my devotion to her. I would not leave her room for a moment during the crisis of her fever; though I forced my mother to take care of herself. I spurned all caution, all consideration for my own part, and rested neither day nor night until told she was out of danger.

This was no fit preparation for meeting this subsequent affliction, and when the physician announced the fact, adding his fear that sight would never return, I was totally overcome. Horror-struck, and hardly able to breathe, I listened to his alarming suggestions with despair, and when left to myself, I rushed away wildly from the house, not to see if, in the open air, I could regain some portion of self-command, but to give uncontrolled expression to my misery.

Passing hurriedly down through the shrubberies, I entered Cheslyn Park, and scarcely conscious what I was doing, I followed a well-known path, which led to a sort of grotto, long ago constructed by us when children.

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Here on the bank, where Grace and I had often sat and read or talked together, I threw myself down, and gave vent to my choking emotions in tears, sobs, even screams of grief.

What, Grace, my sister, my sweet, sweet sister, condemned to this horrible fate! She so young, so innocent, so good; what had she done to deserve it? what had any of us done to incur such a penalty? Blind—blind for life—to be dark, all dark and helpless, she, who was so fond of light and cheerfulness! she, who so loved to do good and to help others! she who had such pleasure in mental cultivation, in acquiring information of every kind! Was she never to look upon us again? had she said farewell to the scenery she delighted in? were all her joyous anticipations of home to be so cut off at once?

I shut my eyes, and tried to think, to realize what it would be never to open them again; and then I screamed again with frantic passion, as I reflected on my sister's fate.

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A step roused my attention; it was a man, in a groom's livery, who came a little way towards the spot, and then apparently recognising me, he respectfully raised his hat, and retreated. The interruption gave a little turn to my thoughts; I tried to check my bursting sobs, and to subdue my passionate emotion. Before, however, I had gained much self-command, I heard a lighter, quicker step, and a lady of middle age, but with a most pleasing, winning exterior, approached me. There was a little hesitation in her manner, but she came up close, and asked in a voice of great sweetness and kindness, whether she could be of any use to me.

Although she addressed me by my name, I had not an idea who she was; my thoughts were too confused to guess; but attempting to rise, I sobbed out a broken reply, that no one could help me now.

"Do not disturb yourself," said she, gently pressing my shoulder to make me sit still; "you are too much agitated at this moment to

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move. Pray sit still, I would not have intruded, but that hearing accents of distress, and the groom telling me it was Miss Moore, I would not pass by on the other side. You are hardly fit to be left alone, but if you wish it I will go."

I wanted some one to speak to of the sorrow bursting my heart; it was the wish to give it utterance that made me scream aloud. I clasped the kind hand which rested lightly on my shoulder, I leant my head upon the arm, I believe I even clutched her dress, in my fear she should go away, and between my thick, fast-coming sobs, I articulated wildly:

"Don't leave me!"

"I will not, indeed," said she, sitting down and supporting me in her arms. "But this grief is terrible; the sorrow which causes it must be deep! I fear your sister—"

I screamed again, as one would at a rude touch on a wound.

"We had been concerned to hear she was ill," pursued she, after a pause of sufficient

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length to allow me to recover slightly; "is she so much worse, the report was that she was recovering?"

"No, no!" I exclaimed, "she will never—*never* recover. Oh, Grace, Grace!"

My companion's eyes glistened.

"That is a heavy trial indeed, dear Miss Moore," said she, in a faltering voice. "So young, so fair; snatched away so soon. Can it be—yet it must be the best for her!"

"Oh! no, no," I cried with greater vehemence; "we have not lost her, but she has lost all that can make life desirable."

"Lost all!" said she, changing countenance, "what do you—what can you mean?"

"She will recover her health perhaps, but she will be—"

I choked again, and then gave way once more to the screams of passion which my agony excited.

"Oh, hush! hush!" said the lady gently, yet in a tone of rebuke, "you can do your poor sister no good by this passionate grief,

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you must not give way to such vehemence, it is not right; sorrow at affliction must be felt, but it should be patient, not rebellious, grief. If it is as you say, and your sister is living and may live, whatever else she may have lost, let her not lose her sister by a wilful abandonment to despair."

"Don't reproach me, I cannot help it," was my answer, but I grew calmer.

"Try to tell me what it is you dread," said she presently, "perhaps if you could speak the dark fear which distresses you, it might remove a part of its burden. She has lost what?—not the light of reason surely?"

"No, but the light of day. She will be blind!" the words burst out convulsively.

"Blind—that is sad indeed! Is it certain —hopeless quite?"

"The doctor says so—oh! Grace, Grace, my darling."

"Nay, now you must check these passionate forebodings," said she, kindly drawing me close to her, and putting her lips to my fore-

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head, "amiable as your sorrow for her is, natural and unselfish, you must not let sympathy with her privation take a course which will only increase it. Consider, my dear, the more dependent this beloved sister becomes on you, the more necessary it is that you should acquire virtuous firmness and self-control. Could your weeping away your eyes give her back her sight I would not check you, but this is not the case you know."

"I wish it were. But I would share her grief, her privation. I don't value sight for myself."

"Then value it for her. If you do wish to lessen her privation, devote your eyes to better purposes than useless, helpless tears. Be eyes to her henceforth, and your life will not want an object; you will have a never-failing subject for self-sacrifice."

"But if you knew Grace," returned I, "you would better know how great the sacrifice to her will be; if you knew how gay, how active she has been; how fond of study, how

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ingenious, how energetic! All her life she has been like a bird, like a fountain ever springing up, and now—now it will be stagnation, darkness, and despair."

"Not so indeed, dear Miss Moore. The Hand which sends the burden, sends the strength to bear it too! Though I have never known your sister, I feel sure that, from the character I have heard of her, darkness and despair will never be her portion. Bodily darkness she may undergo, but if the mind be bright and cheerful, if the temper be patient and loving, if the faith be strong and the hope surely fixed, the loss will be turned to gain; here perhaps, hereafter certainly. The heir of Heaven will not repine, far less despair."

"Ah! you do not know; it is easy to talk of patience, but how will she bear it?"

"I do know, as nearly as one can know, without personal experience; and I feel confident that such a mind as hers will not be crushed, but strengthened by the trial. Not at first perhaps,—she will shrink may be, and

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mourn the lost blessing, and suffer whilst hope and fear are struggling; we must not look for composure and resignation till hope is given up, and the trial is accepted as inevitable. But it is, consequently, the more necessary that during that painful sickening period, you should possess your soul in that patience which may help to support hers; that your courage should not fail nor your endurance give way, lest she should feel her personal privations enhanced by supposing herself a burden on others."

"I will bear, I can bear, anything for her," said I passionately.

"I know you can, if you have the invisible strength which never fails. Without that even the warmest affection will cool on trial. Our work is proportioned to our powers, and the exercise which calls them out is intended to prove our weakness as well as our strength, that we may know what needs improving, altering, mending, or removing, in the machinery of our moral nature. When that all

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works perfectly, when every impulse, feeling, and wish, every action and every thought obeys the Great Maker's will, when we attain perfection, our time of trial will be over, our probation will end, we shall enter into rest."

I was silent, but I had ceased crying, and was tolerably calm.

"I have spoken to you openly, Miss Moore, for although actually strangers hitherto, I hope we shall be so no more; and I have heard much of you both from my son and daughter."

"You are—who?" said I, suddenly recollecting that I did not know.

"Lady Suffield."

The name startled me, recalling many bygone associations and idle speeches of old times. Shame and gratitude struggled for a moment, but gratitude carried the day, and holding her hand as I lingered, I said:

"Your kindness perhaps makes me trespass, but may I come again to you when I want comfort and advice?"

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"Certainly; come to me, if I can be of use; but let me remind you that I only spoke as a stranger from the impulse of the moment; you must have a better—a much more competent adviser, in your mother."

"Mamma!" ejaculated I, in a voice I am afraid not quite respectful, "she is more likely to ask advice than to give it; to need support than to be herself the supporter."

"She will indeed, need every support which faith, patience, or love can bestow," replied Lady Suffield, "and you, I am sure, will remember that the best support a daughter can afford is not of course in words, but in actions. The silent assurance of heart-felt sympathy, the quiet evidence that you suffer with, and for her, the unobtrusive tokens of affection,—these are what a mother's heart craves; and what, of all worldly things, are the dearest comforts she can have. But still I know a friend is often useful outside the family; I shall be happy if you find I can be such."

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With many professions of gratitude on my part, and good will on hers, we parted, and I went back, musing sorrowfully, but with less passionate impatience on the affliction which had been the origin of our meeting.

My feelings indeed were divided at the moment, for pleasure at the interview would have its share in my emotions, and mix with my concern for Grace. So this was Lady Suffield! No wonder her son was elegant in person and mind, too. They were very different certainly from what I had fancied; but what a blessing it would be to have such a neighbour! I would go to her in every trouble—I would confide to her all my thoughts; she should advise and counsel me in every perplexity.

Such were my dreams as I re-entered the house; but I must confess that I gave no symptom of any inclination to follow her advice, nor was that any part of my system. The friendship which I proposed to cultivate with her was, I believe, to have consisted of

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just so much confidence on my side as would relieve my mind; I expected to find a vent for every murmur in her company,—a depositary for every uneasiness in her ear, and a reasonable—perhaps an unreasonable, amount of flattering sympathy and commiseration for my hard lot in return.

My poor mother! It cuts me to the heart now to think what she must have suffered at this time, and how little I helped to bear her burden. My father's grief at this sad result to Grace was, like mine, frantic and terrible; he could hardly even control himself in her presence, and his agony at times was frightful. I used to run away from it, declaring it too much for my feelings, and so my mother was left to bear all. There were other sources of uneasiness weighing on her mind also, arising from the extravagant and unsteady conduct of my brothers; and when to this was added the attention required by her helpless convalescent, the incessant watchfulness, the necessity for calm and even

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cheerful words to soothe her spirits, it may be imagined how much she needed all the support and consolation which Lady Suffield had pointed out as in my power.

It cannot easily be imagined how little she had it.

For two or three weeks after the blindness of Grace seemed certain, but before we had altogether given up hope of some cure being found, I was like one distracted. Anything like agitation being strictly prohibited in her presence, as the worst possible thing for her; I was hardly permitted in her room, for I had not the smallest self-control; and they feared every moment that I should by some unguarded expression communicate to my sister how hopeless we considered her recovery of sight to be. I daresay my nervous system had been upset by the nights of watching and days of close attendance in her sick-room, but I do not lay the blame of my conduct on that. I know I made no attempt

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to do better, but gave way to all the impatience of my unrestrained grief.

At last, I was really so ill, and so useless, that Lady Suffield, whom I saw every day, and who had more influence over me than any body else, invited me to spend a few days at the Grange, to try if change would calm my temper and strengthen my mind. Just before I went, I stole into Grace's room to say good-bye, thinking however that she was asleep, and that my fortitude would not be tried. She was not; and as I leant over her she heard me, and asked who was there.

"I am so glad you are going to the Grange, dear Henrietta," said she, smiling. "I want to know all about it; whether they have altered it in any way. I hope I shall see it, too, some day; but, meantime, you must observe for me, and report."

"See it! Oh, Grace, I wish you could!"

"Oh, I daresay I shall, when I get better. Come and see me to-morrow, if you can; but

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not if you have anything pleasant to do. And do pray take care of yourself, and get strong again, for it vexes me to think how you have worn yourself out waiting on me."

I could only kiss her, and strangle my sobs.

"Oh, fie! Henrietta," said she laughingly, passing her poor thin fingers over my cheeks, "positively crying like a baby at leaving home. Come, come, it is no such desperate distance you are going to; and when you come back, if you have any regard for me let me see you with dry eyes, and bright cheeks again. Good-bye!"

I ran away, and sobbed, as she said, like a baby, all the way to the Grange.

I had become pretty well acquainted with both the daughters of Lady Suffield. They were lady-like, sensible, well-informed women, but without any very remarkable characteristic to strike the eye at first meeting, and they excited no interest in me. We did not draw together at all. There was, especially in the elder one, something cold and composed,

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which offended me, I believe, because it was so entirely at variance with my impulsive habits; and though I could not deny them a certain amount of praise, anybody with the least penetration, would have discovered that I really considered the qualities I affected to commend, rather as demerits than virtues.

It certainly did not enter my mind at the time, that I was at all indebted to them for the gentle patience and forbearance they exercised towards me; nor did it strike me that any thing was due on my part, any effort at self-control, or attempt at quietness, if not resignation, in return for the sacrifice of receiving me so kindly into their house.

Perhaps, indeed, had I been asked, I might have denied that there was anything in my conduct out of the common way, or at variance with what must be expected of me. I had so little idea of attempting to please any one, unless I happened to like it, that to have suggested *that* as a duty, would certainly have surprised me greatly. But my manner

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of going on must have been trying, especially to people who had no personal regard for me. I could not employ myself in any way; but with my usual disregard of forms and courtesies, spent the afternoon in wandering about the house, refreshing my fancy with all the old recollections which I could call up, and renewing my grief with the sight of such antique pieces of furniture, or faded prints and pictures, as recalled the days of our childhood in that house.

Wearied out at last alike in body and mind, I sat down in the drawing-room, opposite a likeness of Grace when about twelve years old; and too exhausted even to cry more, I remained musingly contemplating the picture, and indulging sad thoughts.

Lady Suffield had left the room: her two daughters were sitting there in a silence that worried and irritated my sensitive feelings.

"Do play to me," said I at last, to break the oppressive pause, for Miss Suffield was a

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good musician: "play something plaintive and low."

With a complaisance I ill deserved, she took her harp, and the low thrilling tones of the music she drew forth floated sweetly round me, and produced a dreamy, luxurious sense of melancholy. Indistinct visions, uncertain recollections, dim images of former years were struggling in my mind. I was trying to grasp them mentally, but the phantasies eluded me, as the figures of a dream, or the voices at a distance, which seem distinct when we are not listening, but are unintelligible if we attend to them.

The door opened softly. I did not turn, for I took it for granted that it was Lady Suffield, and so I heeded not, until the music ceased suddenly, and I heard Clara Suffield exclaim:

"St. John! when did you return?"

Then I looked up, and saw Mr. Suffield, whom his sisters were welcoming with lively

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pleasure. I knew he had been travelling in the Highlands, and was not expected at Cheslyn just then; but their surprise at his appearance was the only thing that astonished me, for I was too much accustomed to eccentricities of movement in young men to wonder, had Stuart or Edward done the same. I did not move, but after a moment he saw me, and coming forward with a look which showed that my presence was unexpected, said, as he held out his hand:

"I have the pleasure of welcoming Miss Moore back to England. I hope you and your family are all well?"

I had given him my hand by a mechanical impulse, without opening my lips; but as he finished his greeting, with a look of perfect unconsciousness of our trouble, and a half-glance at the portrait opposite which I was sitting, I lost all self-command, and uttering a frantic scream, I went off into a violent hysterical fit of weeping.

What happened immediately I do not know;

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I have an indistinct impression of Clara drawing her brother away, and Mary Suffield calmly supporting me; then of Lady Suffield herself being present, and then of being carried away: but my next clear idea is of being in bed, and of seeing my kind hostess leaning over my pillow, with a face of compassion. I was calm then; calm enough to thank her, and express some regret at giving her so much trouble. She told me not to talk, and, sitting down, she read to me a Psalm or two, in a low, soft voice, like distant music. How long she read I do not know, for I dropped asleep, whilst I was trying to fancy her a guardian angel keeping watch over me, perhaps as a reward for my sisterly affection.

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CHAPTER III.

P. Hen. This life of ours is a wild æolian harp of many a joyous strain,
But under them all there runs a loud perpetual wail of souls in pain.
Elsie. All through life there are wayside inns, where man may refresh his soul with love;
Even the lowest may quench his thirst at rivulets fed by springs from above.
Golden Legend.

It is one of Miss Jane Taylor's acute observations, that "it is easier to be distracted for a week, than to be sorrowful for life;" and I was certainly an instance of this. Although the next morning I was too languid and weak to come down stairs, I was considerably quieter than I had been for many days; and towards the evening, Lady Suffield persuaded

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me to leave my room, and try the effect of fresh air on the lawn.

I thought the gentleman looked a little afraid of coming near me. I daresay he did not wish for a renewal of yesterday's scene; his mother, however, began speaking of his tour, and as I seemed interested in her account, she called him up to give some further particulars himself. Mr. Suffield presently sat down on the lawn at our feet, for we were resting on a bench beneath a huge spreading elm, whose boughs swept the ground around us, and here we remained in the calm quiet of a lovely evening, conversing on various subjects, until the twilight deepened into gloom, and that again was dispersed by the silver rays of a full harvest moon. There was neither chill nor damp in the air to drive us in, and I have no doubt my friend thought, and thought rightly too, that it was altogether as good a tonic as I could have.

St. John made himself extremely agreeable. I do not think that is precisely the

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right way to express it either, for there was no effort on his part, no attempt at effect or display; he was as simple and straightforward as possible in his conversation; and though he related the things which were most interesting, and told one exactly what one wanted to know, it seemed entirely the result of his own good taste, clear judgment, and well-informed mind that he was pleasant. I could no more have taken it as a personal compliment, than I could the shade of the tree under which we were resting.

In many people, and perhaps at another time even in him, I should have laughed at and scorned, the simple right principles which his conversation developed. The reference to higher motives than mere pleasure incidentally made, the concern for the moral good of others, the reverence for sacred things implied as a matter of course, I should have set down as methodistical or affected; but there was something about him and his mother which influenced me against my will; a sort

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of sincerity which drove away my spirit of *persiflage;* and *ricaneuse* as I was, I dared not sneer at them.

It was a very pleasant evening that we spent, and it was the beginning with me of a higher appreciation of St. John Suffield. Thinking about him after we had parted for the night, I decided that he had greatly improved in manner during the last two years; for although with nothing of foreign gallantry, nothing of flattery, nothing in the least indicative of the personal admiration, or the general subservience to which I was pretty well accustomed, he was indisputably softer, more tolerant, and more courteous. If he thought me wrong, he did not immediately say so; and he had no longer that air of distrust, as if he were expecting to disapprove what I said, and prepared to combat it. His manner had been kind and considerate, as if desirous of interesting and pleasing me.

I was well enough the next morning to wish to go to Fairy Hill and see Grace myself.

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Lady Suffield did not oppose my making the effort, but she begged me to come back to them, and not allow my anxiety for my sister to induce me to resume my attendance on her, until my strength was a little more restored, and my nerves had settled into a healthy state of firmness.

Mr. Suffield offered to drive me in the pony carriage, and either to wait for me there, or to return and fetch me at any hour I should name. It must have been a great relief to the ladies to get me out of the house, considering what a burden I was on their hands; although I daresay they would not have admitted it any more than I should, for at the time the notion did not occur to me.

"You had a good account from Fairy Hill this morning," said he, when we had gone a little way in silence.

I answered that I had, and then added that I had to thank him for the kind expressions of his sympathy and concern, which his mother had reported to me.

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"You need not do that," was his reply, "every one must feel—it is indeed a terrible trial—but perhaps it is not hopeless—there may be a remedy."

"I cannot entertain such an idea," was my answer; "from the first moment I felt a conviction that the case was desperate."

"That is unfortunate," said he, quietly, "for it must have made you unequal to comforting her; no doubt this conviction had something to do with the nervous attack from which you have suffered, either as cause or effect, or perhaps a little of both."

"I could not help it," said I, a little vexed at his tone; "nor do I think giving Grace false hopes, if I could have done it, would have been useful or beneficial. The sooner she learns to face the truth, the sooner she will submit patiently."

"Did not your illness arise from the shock?" asked he earnestly.

"Yes, certainly; the sudden blow unnerved me completely. You may despise me for

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weakness, Mr. Suffield, but I don't pretend to the power of taking grief calmly."

"I am not despising you; I was only going to say, that if the intelligence and the conviction of your sister's misfortune had so severe an effect on you, what would it not inevitably have on her, weakened by so terrible an illness, and herself the one to endure?"

I did not answer.

"You must let her hope, at least, until she is strong enough to bear—" added he, then stopped.

"To bear despair," said I, in a broken whisper.

"No, no; not despair. That we need never suffer. It is only a too sudden realization of her trial that I deprecate, before custom has lessened its imaginary horrors, and time has shown her how many blessings she has left. When she has learnt how much dearer her affliction makes her, how her helplessness binds her friends all the closer; how

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darkness here increases the value of the promised undimned light hereafter; when she has found, in short, that Omniscient love is never mistaken in the means it employs for our improvement and happiness, then she will herself gradually adopt the view you take without pain, and learn to put off the pleasure of gazing on those she loves, until she meets them in another world."

"People don't die directly they grow blind, so I suppose it is possible to survive it," said I, with some vehemence; "but I am sure it would soon kill me!"

"No;" replied he, "there never yet was the burden laid on a human being, that the means of sustaining it were not also placed within his reach."

"Yet people do die of grief," said I.

"When they will not avail themselves of the support provided," was his quiet reply.

"I am certain it would break my heart to lose my sight," repeated I decidedly.

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"You are not called on to bear it."

I was silent for several minutes, and then said, I daresay in a gentler tone:—

"But to see her enduring it, you do not call that a slight trial?"

"No, indeed," said he warmly, and turning towards me with an expression of real interest, "if I may venture to say what I feel, I should express how very truly I sympathise in your grief. Knowing the strong affection that exists between you, I can understand, at least in some degree, how the very greatness of your mutual love, will, at the first moment embitter your mutual sorrow; you will grieve for her more than she will for herself, whilst, very probably, half her sorrow at her privation will be on your account."

"Possibly—I daresay you are right," I murmured, surprised and gratified at his manner.

"But then this will be only at first," he went on, "when time has worn out the first sharpness of the distress, *that* love will bring

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its own healing power. For her sake you will exert yourself to supply what she needs; you will have to look at everything with double interest, for you will see for her; every book you read will be studied for her sake, and so on through life—I believe there is no dearer feeling than what is produced by a sense of dependence and protection. And she, to repay you, will cultivate cheerfulness, which will end in securing her real contentment."

We had reached the house before I had sufficiently regained my self-command to reply; there was something in his manner which so plainly shewed that his words came straight from his heart that it quite took away the power of answering him.

At my request, he went in with me, nominally to call on my father, really I dare say to obtain more accurate information about the invalid. To my surprise, I found Edward had arrived; he had been making one of his usual excursions, and he had not been expected home just now, but the news of Grace's ill-

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ness recalled him as soon as it reached him, and he had hurried home, hardly knowing whether he should be in time to see her again, to find her recovering, but blind!

The attachment between these two was very strong. Edward had a most affectionate disposition, and Grace was more even to him, than I was to Stuart; well she might be, since she united to a sisterly love at least as strong as mine, a most unselfish readiness to yield, and a thoughtful attention to his comfort and interest which I could not always boast.

Edward was sitting with Grace when I went up stairs; and she was lying on a sofa with her pale face looking so sweetly happy; such a tender, almost unearthly smile upon her lips, as she reclined, with one hand clasped in his, and her other holding a fresh bunch of flowers, whose bright tints contrasted strongly with her delicate complexion, that I paused a moment at the door to look at her.

It overset my composure to hear her ask

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who was there; although her eyelids were raised, and her large, dark eyes were turned towards me. Oh, the heavy night of those eyes! I came up and kissed her without speaking, and she laughed at my taking her by surprise, and pulled me close to her, and felt my face, and twined her fingers in my long curls, and observed that I seemed better; and then suddenly remembering, she exclaimed:

"But Henrietta, here is Edward—that is, he was here just now!" And she stretched out her hand to feel for him.

I shall never forget the look of Edward's face as our eyes met; the anguish of his countenance, as that action displayed her helplessness—her loss. It was but by his face that his feelings were betrayed! he commanded his voice much better than I could mine, as he answered that he was close by her; taking her hand to convince her of it, as he kissed first my cheek, then hers.

She made me sit down close to her, and

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began to talk gaily of my visit to the Grange, asking more questions than I could answer about the growth of trees, or the welfare of her gold fish, and other home topics. She spoke, too, of how she would go and see it all herself, when she had recovered, and wondered whether Lady Suffield would mind her walking about the gardens and shrubberies, or sitting under the dear old elm tree on the lawn, as soon as she was well enough to go out.

"It would do my eyes good to see it all again," said she.

I gasped from the pain in my heart her words occasioned. However I got voice enough to assure her the Suffields were all very kind, and would do anything for us; and of course we might depend on being allowed to go all about when and where we liked.

"Papa's own place!"

"Aye, but it is not papa's until he has got it back again," said Grace, "and may be,

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however kind she may be to you, she may not care about me in the same way; I dare say they like having you staying with them."

"I am sure you may depend upon their kindness," I answered warmly. "Nobody could grieve more for you except ourselves, and express more anxiety to do everything to alleviate your misfortune!"

"Grieve for me!—for my misfortune!" repeated she, with a little accent of surprise. "Not such a very extraordinary misfortune to have a fever and recover from it! I am much obliged to them, or to anybody who has been concerned about me during my illness; but by the time I am able to go down to the Grange, and thank them, I hope all subject of grief and occasion for alleviation will be over. Eh, Henrietta?"

Edward gave me a look of reproach for my incautious speech, and then hastily observed, that both from what he had seen and heard of the Suffields, he really believed they were very good sort of people.

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I think there was a perceptible shade on my sister's features for some little time after this; and her cheerful tone seemed somewhat of an effort. However, my mother came in, and noticing that she looked tired, begged us to leave her quiet, to which Grace consented more readily than I did, and Edward and I went down to luncheon.

Mr. Suffield was still there, and immediately on our entrance questioned me in a low, eager tone about Grace, whilst Edward was occupying my father's attention by some enquiries regarding his horses. I wondered my brother should care for asking such questions just then, not discovering that it was really to avoid more painful topics, which my father could ill bear; but I, too, had the discretion to defer the particulars of my own feelings until we were out of the house, and contented myself with saying I thought Grace was better than I could have expected, although I was so engrossed by the remembrance of the scene upstairs that I could not speak on any differ-

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ent topic. Such self-command was beyond me.

When I went up to my sister's room after luncheon to say goodbye, she was lying asleep, and as I stooped over her, I saw that tears were glistening on her eyelashes, and her cheeks still showed traces of them. Alas, there was no need to darken the room for her to sleep quietly, and in the broad glare of daylight I could see too plainly how she had been weeping.

What had caused her to shed those tears? Had the hopelessness of her blindness suddenly struck her? Had my words conveyed to her the first intimation what a life of trial was before her? I hung over her with a sensation of self-reproach, and then unwilling to detain Mr. Suffield longer, or perhaps anxious to be once more in his company, and give utterance to my feelings, I ran away, and left her sleeping.

But after all I was disappointed; he was quite silent as he drove back to the Grange;

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and I hardly know what, but something in his look rendered me unwilling to begin speaking of our own affairs, and we actually accomplished the distance before a word was uttered.

I found visitors in the drawing room.

A Mrs. Dering and her daughter were sitting there with the ladies of the house. I had never seen them before, but inferred from their conversation that they were neighbours. The mother wore a widow's dress, and there was something about her, a sort of neatness and method, an absence of fashion, and yet a peculiarly genteel look, that convinced me she had been the wife of a clergyman. She looked very good, but a middle-aged woman, as I then thought those who had attained the age of forty could not interest me much; and her gentle, rather languid tones gave me no pleasure. Her daughter attracted me a great deal more. She seemed about eighteen; was small, elegant, and extremely pretty; fair, with regular Grecian features, most delicately

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moulded, bright blue eyes, and a mouth whose sweetness of expression I have never seen surpassed. Her manners were lively, but pleasant; her dress—a great index with me—although quiet, both fashionable and graceful; and her whole appearance uncommonly captivating.

I always piqued myself on being superior to the feminine weakness of which women are accused by men. I did not dislike beauty in another, on the contrary, I loathed plainness, and mentally connected it with ill-nature. Miss Dering's face and manners enchanted me; I begged to be introduced, expressed a strong wish to make her acquaintance, and found out where they lived.

She looked very much pleased at my advances, and met them with a cordiality just enough tinctured with shyness to be perfectly bewitching. I was convinced that she felt my acquaintance an honour, and my courtesy increased with the conviction. We dashed off in an animated discussion on our favourite

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amusements, and occupations; music, Italian, painting on velvet, and the Waverley novels; and when Mrs. Dering rose to go, I and her daughter parted as if we had been old friends.

Mrs. Dering said she would do herself the honour of calling on Mrs. Moore, as soon as she had reason to suppose my sister's recovery would make such a visit welcome; and I assured Miss Dering that I never stood upon such ceremony, but would come and see her the very first opportunity.

As soon as they were gone, I began to ask who they were. My conjectures were right, as to Mr. Dering; he had been a clergyman, a chaplain in India, and by that means had been known to the Suffields. Mrs. Dering, too, was an East Indian, but her daughter had been entirely educated in England. There were several other children, boys and girls, Emily was the eldest; they were in narrow circumstances, and Mrs. Dering had delicate health. All this delighted me. I would

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certainly patronise this beautiful Emily Dering, it would be equally kind and generous to do so; I would supply her with advantages which perhaps their narrow income might not afford; books, music, society, I would place it all within her reach; Grace, too, would be delighted with her! Ah poor Grace!

So impatient was I to put my plan in practice that I determined to call on the Derings the next day, and announced my intention at breakfast.

Lady Suffield seemed inclined to demur. Would it not be better, she urged, to let them pay the first visit, as Mrs. Dering had proposed.

I protested against such tiresome ceremonies, they interfered impertinently with my pleasures; besides, I added, it would be quite unnecessary here, for our absence of two years could not make us in the position of strangers and new-comers in the country, so we had in every respect a right to pay the first visit.

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"Then suppose you were to ask your mother, and go with her," said Lady Suffield; I assured her I was never yet bound by the foolish conventionalities which ruled the world, but acted always as my feelings dictated.

"I wonder what you would think," said she smiling, "if Miss Dering had acted so to you. Suppose it were she who insisted on paying you a visit, without any reference to etiquette or the customary habits of the world."

The notion surprised me. "She would never dream of such a thing," I said hastily, "it would be too great a liberty, considering our relative situations. Our positions in life are so different."

"Yes, because your fortunes are different; but, excepting money, which I think I have heard you more than once say gives no claim to distinction alone, there is no difference in your positions. You are both the daughters

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of gentlemen, and have been educated as such. Do you not admit that?"

"Oh, my dear Lady Suffield!" said I coaxingly, "please don't set yourself against my little plan. You are so very wise and good that I esteem you beyond everything, consequently a great way beyond having a notion of emulating you. I have promised myself to call on Emily Dering this morning, and I really make a scruple of breaking my word, or I shall never believe myself again. Pray don't prevent me."

"You need not ask me that," said she, smiling good humouredly, "I can only advise, I cannot prevent."

"And I assure you I value your advice more than anything, except my own way. Like the Grecian generals, if I adjudged the first prize for sagacity to myself, I would certainly always give you the second."

For a wonder I did determine to take her advice however, so far as speaking to my mother before I called on the Derings; partly

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because I knew very well that it would lead to no difference in my resolution, and partly because I could see that St. John Suffield thought I ought to do so. Not that I owned this latter motive to myself, I was not conscious of his influence over me; nor, to do him justice had he the least appearance of wishing for it. He had said nothing at all during the discussion, and had not raised his eyes from his paper, but his manner was enough to convince me that he took his mother's view; so I yielded the point, and went home first. The result was just what I expected. My mother made no opposition. I suspect she knew from my tone that it would be useless, and she was wise enough to keep what little influence she might still have for matters of real importance, not mere scruples of etiquette. She promised to call as soon as she could, and commissioned me with her excuses to Mrs. Dering for not accompanying me.

As to Grace, my account of Emily Dering sent her into raptures. She was delighted

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that I should have found such a friend, was most anxious to see her, and begged me eagerly to cultivate her acquaintance with the utmost celerity, keeping in her mind at the same time a blank corner of interest for her share, whenever she should be well enough to make use of it.

With my own inclinations re-inforced by such motives, I paid the visit on my return from Fairy Hall to the Grange. The Derings lived in the village in one half of a double house, which had until the last year stood for some time entirely empty. The dwelling was approached through a little lawn, now ornamented tastefully with flowers, shrubs, and other prettinesses. The front of the house was covered with ivy and climbing plants; the whole aspect was at once elegant and attractive.

I was admitted, and was equally pleased with the interior. There was pretty furniture, pictures, a piano, books in abundance, and flowers in profusion. Moreover, the west

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window which used to look on the lawn, now opened into a well stocked green-house, whose plants formed a pleasant vista for the eye to rest on, whilst a lage bay window with a southern aspect, made with its muslin draperies a charming little retreat for a study or boudoir. The room, too, was irregular in shape owing to another recess opposite the window; and I delighted in irregular rooms, draperied recesses, and quaintly disposed furniture. Had I not known them already, I should have felt, after a glance round that apartment, that I should certainly love the people who lived there. Charmed with my new acquaintance, I loitered away the rest of the afternoon in Emily's company, trying her music, examining her books, admiring her work, sauntering in the garden which stretched down behind the house quite to the river's banks, and which though not very large was arranged with a taste and judgment not often met with.

Emily's enthusiasm on all subjects of art

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and learning was bewitching to me. She was certainly very clever, had a wonderful memory and a lively imagination; her conversation always struck me as original and spirited at the time, although afterwards if I tried to describe its charm it vanished. Often I had been exceedingly entertained without being able to give an idea of the subject.

On this first visit I believe I transgressed two laws of propriety, I made it unreasonably long, and I returned late for dinner at the Grange.

I was so late, that I sent down word to Lady Suffield to beg she would not wait for me, and then delighted with my own thoughtful politeness on this occasion, I leisurely went though the duties of the toilet, musing, whilst my maid performed her work, on my new acquaintance, and the pleasures her society promised.

To my great surprise I found the Suffields had been quite uneasy at my long absence, they had feared, I believe, Grace was worse,

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or that something uncomfortable had detained me, having no idea but that I had been all the time at Fairy Hill.

I can do justice now to the politeness with which they listened to my account of what I had been doing, and the forbearance with which they entered pleasantly into my raptures about Emily; whilst I was as indifferent about my own want of punctuality, and as composed whilst eating my dinner when they had just finished theirs, as if the laws of mutual politeness had never entered my head.

I did remark, I remember, that I was glad they had not waited for me; but I am not quite sure whether it occurred to me that I had in the least trespassed on their kindness. I ought to observe, by the way, that a mania for punctuality was one of Lady Suffield's peculiar weaknesses; she was a slave to hours and minutes, and guided her household in the same correct path, so that I often put her patience to the test by my irregularities, although never more so than that day.

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My visit to the Grange ended two days after that ; my health and nerves were, in my opinion, quite restored, and I was wanted at home, I said.

I believed I was, and Lady Suffield knew I ought to go, so she did not plead for a longer visit. I only do this excellent woman justice, by saying, that troublesome and trying as I must have been, disregarding her advice, defying her ideas of correct manners, and breaking her household rules with a lawlessness at which I now wonder, I do believe she would have set aside every personal feeling, and would have pressed me to stay, had I still required it for my health. It seems almost unreasonable to say she loved me, for I am sure I did nothing to deserve her love, yet her conduct always gave me that impression, and looking back through the vista of years, I can only ascribe her behaviour to that motive. Perhaps she loved me because she had been useful to me; we had met in my hour of distress, and she had consoled me.

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Perhaps it was only because I plagued her; as mothers are always said to love best the most troublesome of their children, and she had none of her own who had tried the experiment, I am sure; for Mary and Clara were patterns of steadiness, and St. John worshipped his mother too sincerely to have ever cost her other tears than those of happiness.

Home I came to Fairy Hill, to attend on Grace, and cultivate Emily Dering.

My sister was soon well enough to come down stairs, and to see people who called. Naturally enough the variety of change of place and company was longed for by her. Perhaps she had an indistinct notion that some other apartment would be lighter. I was sitting with her in the bright morning-room at home a day or two after she had been brought down stairs, when Edward and Mr. Suffield entered; my brother first. She knew his touch on the door-handle, and turned towards him from her sofa.

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"Edward are you coming to read to me—but who is with you?" added she, interrupting herself, as she became conscious of another person's presence.

"Not a stranger," said Mr. Suffield, advancing close to her, "you have not forgotten me."

"Ah," said she, holding out her hand in the direction of his voice, "I beg your pardon, I did not see who it was."

He turned his eyes on me with a look that said, or seemed to say, he could understand now in part my former convulsions of sorrow; there was something so inexpressibly touching in the sweet, patient aspect of her face, and the helplessness of her air, as she softly extended her hand, that a creature must have been a stoic not to be moved by it. It was pity, sympathy, and admiration combined that his look spoke; partly to me, partly to her. I think he had a moment's struggle before he could speak again, then he said in a cheerful voice:

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"I have brought you some flowers from your favourite tree, Miss Grace, will you accept them?"

"My favourite tree, where? which? oh, magnolias!" exclaimed she, as she passed her fingers over the blossoms he put in her hand, and then inhaled the strong fragrance with delight. "How delicious! what made you think it was my favourite tree, Mr. Suffield?"

"You said so when we were looking at it about two years ago," was his reply.

"Ah—" the word came with a sort of sigh, and she pressed her face close over the flowers again, then added, "You have a good memory."

"For some things I have!"

"Some things?" repeated I; "what sort of things? I hope they are only good ones!"

"Why?" asked he, with a curious look at me.

"Oh, because I do! a reason that leaves you nothing more to ask."

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"If your memory is always as kindly employed as to-day," said Grace, still caressing her flowers with her light fingers, "it will leave nothing to be desired."

"If it is never more taxed, it will be but little burdened," Mr. Suffield answered, in a tone which seemed to deprecate thanks. "I hardly expected the pleasure of seeing you to-day, and was intending to leave those flowers, when I met your brother, fortunately."

"I am very glad of it," said Grace, "I think I shall lay a trap for visitors outside, now I am well enough to see them; set Henrietta or Edward always on the doorstep, or something of the sort; for after being out of England for so long, and then shut up with a fever for company, it is a real pleasure to see former friends and acquaintance."

"Everybody who knows you, will be happy to give you pleasure in that way, I should suppose," said he, "as soon as they are aware that you are sufficiently convalescent to admit them."

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"We will send round a crier to inform the world of Grace's wishes," said Edward.

"Do," said she gaily; "let him advertise the neighbourhood in general, in this fashion; 'lost, by a young lady, supposed to have been dropped while travelling on the continent, a large and valuable circle of friends. Whoever will restore the whole, or any part thereof, shall be liberally rewarded by the advertiser.' Do you think that would have any result Mr. Suffield?"

"It would be well if you are not overwhelmed by the result," replied he, "I cannot imagine any one resisting such an appeal, and you would have half the county at your levée."

She made him a laughing answer, accusing him of suspecting everyone of mere mercenary motives; from which he defended himself; but my mother coming in, seemed to think Grace getting flushed and excited, and talked of the danger of over exertion.

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I suppose Mr. Suffield took it as a hint to go; he rose, I did so too; I was going down to Emily Dering's, and wanted to bring her back and introduce her to Grace. I announced my intention, and then St. John Suffield offered to walk with me, which I readily accepted.

"Should I be troubling you too much," said Grace addressing him, "if I asked for the Italian dictionary in the study at home? Edward has been reading to me and we wanted it; we have none in this house."

He eagerly exclaimed at the idea of trouble! was there any other of the books she would like? It would be hard indeed if they could not have the use of their own library when close to it!

All our books had been left in the house when the Suffield's took the Grange.

Grace hesitated a moment. "Yes—no—no thank you; you know I cannot read to myself just yet, Mr. Suffield, so my old favourites would do me no good."

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"But they could be read to you," suggested he.

"No, no—don't talk of it; mamma and Edward and Henrietta already read away all their breath in my service; don't tempt me to be selfish: the old friends must stay till I can manage them myself, I think."

"I have some interesting new books," persisted he, "travels, and fiction, which would please you perhaps; works recently come out."

"Ah, but you must also furnish a new pair of lungs; I really cannot impose more on those now using themselves up in my service."

"We could do that, too," said he, "I am sure; if you would let us, either I or my sisters would be most happy to introduce our own property to your notice. Don't you think those who lend the books should be allowed the privilege of reading them also."

"You are too kind; everybody is so to me,

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but if your sister were near me, I should tax her voice for songs, not stories I believe. Henrietta has said so much of her music and singing—and I do so love it—I quite long to hear her."

During this dialogue, I had been putting on my hat and shawl, which, as usual, were lying on the drawing-room sofa, but now I announced myself ready, so he took leave.

As we crossed the lawn he gave a heavy sigh, as if to try and remove a weight from his heart: and his face betrayed deep feeling.

"It is too touching," said he at last in a low voice. "It does seem a mysterious dispensation!"

"Ah, you don't feel it so easy to consider it a blessing, now that you have seen it," I observed quickly.

"It is certainly difficult to check sensations of regretful wonder. What a sweet face it is; but she is cheerful; does she yet know—"

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"I cannot tell; I believe not."

There was a silence, which I broke by saying—

"I am glad you have seen her; you can better understand what our feelings are; what a perpetual anxiety; what a weight on one's mind her helpless dependence causes. We cannot leave her alone for a minute, and it takes all one's energies to converse with and amuse her."

"Of course, I do indeed feel for you, and can well understand your present anxiety. But this will wear off in time. She will become more independent, will find, or make, occupation for herself; will be able to walk about safely; and in the meantime, you, who have so strong a stimulus in your affection, with powers of mind quite equal to the task, will have no difficulty in supplying the amusement, any more than the tenderness, which just at present she requires."

I was gratified at his way of speaking; he had never even implied so much before. But

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I disclaimed and protested that I had not the power, but only the will he ascribed to me.

He did not argue, he only bade me try my best.

"But," he added presently "you will find an admirable assistant in Miss Dering, if you continue to like her as much as you do now. I never knew anyone with such inexhaustible spirits, so powerful a memory, and such an inventive turn of mind. And the zeal with which she throws herself into the concerns of her friends, her eagerness, and even her impulsiveness will be useful to you now: she will be such an auxiliary!"

"I did not know that you thought so highly of her," was my reply, a little surprised at his eulogium. "I had fancied—one makes such mistakes—but I thought you did not like my making the acquaintance!"

"I never expressed such an opinion. I never took such a liberty!" said he astonished.

"Oh yes, you did, when your mother argued

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with me about my first visit there, you agreed with her in every word quite evidently, I saw it in the position of your shoulders."

He laughed outright at this charge, but made no defence. Prompted by some indefinable feeling of curiosity, I persisted in the subject.

"What did your shoulders mean, if not disapprobation?"

"I might agree with my mother, without meaning to oppose your acquaintance. I might think the time ill-chosen, or the means; I might guess your early visit would interrupt Miss Dering, or regret that it should take you away so soon from us."

"You might; but as none of these was in your thoughts at the time, tell me what was. You blamed me for something, I know; tell me for what, candidly, I will not be offended."

"I thought you less regardful of Miss Dering's claims than you ought to be; treating her too much *de haut en bas*, that was all,"

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said he, in that straightforward way of his, so peculiar.

"Why did you not say so?"

"Because my mother said it much better than I could."

"Oh! but promise me you will, another time, say when you think me wrong."

"I will make no such promise," replied he, decidedly.

"Not! then you are not the friend I took you for."

"Very likely not," was his composed, quiet answer.

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CHAPTER IV.

Do I not know
The life of woman is full of woe,
Toiling on, and on, and on,
With breaking heart and tearful eyes,
And silent lips; and in the soul,
The secret longings that arise,
Which this world never satisfies,
Some more, some less, but of the whole,
Not one quite happy, no, not one."

GOLDEN LEGEND.

WE were at the gate of the Dering's house, which, by the bye, was called Ivy Cottage, the twin dwelling being designated Laurel Cottage; and before another word could pass, Emily turned round the corner of the garden, and met us. She was looking flushed and excited, but very pretty. A new feeling made me glance from her to my companion to see how they met. His warm advocacy of her

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claims and merits had struck me a good deal. There was mutual pleasure in the recognition, but not enough to alarm me; still I watched them.

"Oh, dear, how crookedly the world goes," cried she, as we met; "I do think half the people in it are in the wrong place! You are coming in, both of you?"

"I was coming in, but I shall hardly venture after such a greeting," replied he, archly. "If Miss Dering is in one of her misanthropical moods, I shall decamp, and leave it to the higher powers and more skilful touch of Miss Moore, to smooth away the wrinkles in her mind."

"No, come in; I want to see you for a minute, and I can only spare you one; because I am going up with Miss Moore, presently, to be introduced to her sister, a pleasure of which I have been dreaming so long that I am in no mind to delay it."

We all walked into the cool drawing-room together.

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"But what, or who, is it that is so wrong?" asked I, a little curious and surprised.

"Oh, things and people both. Mr. Suffield, I have exhausted all my eloquence to try and set to rights the fracâs between Mr. Ormond and Mr. Pool, but the latter is obstinately bent on misunderstanding, being aggrieved and going to law. Now is it not vexatious?"

"Who is Mr. Pool?" again asked I.

Mr. Ormond was the clergyman.

"He is the farmer who has the lease of Hazel Farm," replied Mr. Suffield; "one of Mr. Moore's best tenants, I believe, as far as farming goes."

"And what is he quarrelling with Mr. Ormond for?"

"Oh, about tithes! always tithes! the perpetual source of aggression and ill-will amongst the discontented class of society," said Emily.

"But what have you to do with it, then?" demanded I, still more surprised.

"Nothing, really, only Mr. Ormond came

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to mamma to tell his grievances, thinking she might advise him, and hoping something from feminine influence: so we undertook to try and soften matters; but it is hopeless!"

"If Mr. Ormond wants feminine influence," I resumed, "why does he not marry, and not bore his neighbours with his distresses."

"Don't put such an idea in his head," cried Emily. "Though I am a clergyman's daughter, I must say that it is the greatest mistake in the world for clergymen to marry. Their wives are sure to be too sickly to exert themselves, and often make more mischief."

"Just like you, Miss Dering," said Mr. Suffield, "you always run away from individual instances to general rules. But have your efforts been entirely vain?"

"Quite! Mamma and I, stirred up by Mr. Ormond's plaintive story, threw ourselves with energy into the cause; we have talked, coaxed, reasoned; praised Mrs. Pool's dairy; flattered her children; I even made a crayon

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sketch of one to move her feelings, all to no purpose. She is invulnerable, and takes all my insinuating speeches with a grim defiance which reminds me of the Bass rock looking down on the breakers at its foot. She is a petrifaction!"

"And what shall you do next?" asked he, amused, I could see, by her vehemence.

"Well, I must hand over the cause to you, I think. You know you promised to get advice for Mr. Ormond, in case things came to the worst. Legal advice, I mean. No doubt he is an excellent sort of man, but he ought no more to have been a clergyman—The mistakes men make!"

"I don't agree with you," said he, "you are so impatient—you want everyone to be perfect at once. I have no doubt in a few years you will find Mr. Ormond tone down into a very useful, exemplary parish priest. He wants experience just now—time will give it him."

"May be: but then he ought not to be here,

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working on his own strength, and trying his ''prentice hand' on a parish which needs a skilled ruler. That is a mistake, you must admit."

"We might be better off, certainly, if he had all the experience of—Miss Dering," said he, with a sauciness of tone he never used to me.

"He cannot be fit for the duty if he employs auxiliaries to fight his battles," said I, suddenly; "the idea of setting the ladies of his parish to quarrel with his antagonistic farmers, or wrangle with their wives, is too preposterous. I don't see what claim he can have on you!"

"I will venture to say Mr. Ormond did not wish Mrs. or Miss Dering to *quarrel* with Mr. Pool," replied Mr. Suffield.

"Besides, you know we must all help one another," said she; "what should any of us do or be without auxiliaries? The cause of the clergyman, as *clergyman*, is our own; the peace of the parish is for our own advantage,

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and the scandal of dissension is our grief and loss."

This was a new notion to me. Emily went on, turning to Mr. Suffield, and speaking low:

"What I particularly wanted to say was that I think the Romish priest has something to do with it. He has been at the Signora's lately."

"I should not wonder. You don't know whether he has been at Mr. Pool's, do you?"

"Not for certain; but I hugely suspect it, and the next news perhaps will be that he and all his family have conformed to the Romish Church."

"Ah! I will speak to Mr. Ormond, and if needs be—consult a lawyer. Now I must leave you."

He went accordingly; and Emily, tying on her hat again, which she had thrown off on our entrance, prepared to accompany me to Fairy Hill.

"Who is this Signora?" enquired, I as we

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left the house. She placed her finger on her lips, and did not reply till we were some yards from the cottages.

"She lives in the other house," said she, and when we can remember it, we never speak of her in the garden."

"But who is she?"

"Oh, an Italian lady, with her daughter, who have been there nearly half a year. Papists, of course; and there is a priest who came with them, and has been at intervals since. I cannot help thinking they have a good deal to do with the disunions in the parish; suggesting causes of complaint against Mr. Ormond, which our people never grumbled at before."

"I am inclined to think that is prejudice," said I, positively; "English people are so illiberal to foreigners and Catholics. I have seen too much of them in their own country to entertain such ill will. I like Italians."

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"I don't know these ladies personally," said Emily. "Mamma does not want to get acquainted."

"What is their name?"

"Mentesi; Signora Mentesi, and the Signorina Caterina, her daughter."

"What are they like? I wonder if I have ever seen them?" I added.

"The Signora is just what you would expect an Italian to be. Dark, with piercing eyes, and sharp, but handsome features. The daughter looks more Saxon; rather German in her complexion and face, and is fair. Very little is known about them! People don't quite like to visit a family so entirely without introduction, and the rumours that circulate regarding them are so different that they cannot all be true."

"Are they musical?" asked I, anxious to learn more, and hardly knowing what to ask.

"Yes; the Signorina sings superbly; I have often heard her through the open win-

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dow; but except that, nothing can be more quiet than they are."

My imagination was strongly excited by this description. I longed to know more of these forlorn and expatriated strangers,—these objects of universal mistrust or contempt. So like the stiff English prejudices, thought I! It is enough to stamp a character bad in English eyes, not to be known to be good; never giving any generous credit; never taking anything on trust. I will know these people!

Thoughts of the Mentesi were put out of my head for the present, by reaching Fairy Hill, and introducing Emily Dering to Grace. They were as much delighted as I meant them to be, with each other, and after awhile, leaving my visitor employed in playing to Grace, I ran out upon the lawn, to join my father, who was passing the house.

"Papa, do you know who the people are who live at Laurel Cottage?"

"No."

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"They are Italians; don't you know where they come from?"

"I guess from Italy," answered he, in that dry, uncompromising way which gives small encouragement to questioning.

"But how came they to take your cottage?"

"My steward let it to them."

"Yes, I suppose! but I thought you always knew something about your tenants."

"Well, suppose I do, Henrietta?"

"What do you know about these ladies, papa? I do so want to know."

"That the mother is Italian, and the daughter half-and-half—that they call themselves by an Italian name, which probably was not that of the young lady's father. Now, Henrietta, put this and that together, and decide whether there is any necessity for knowing more."

I paused a moment, disappointed; then said:

"Do you really think they are not respectable?"

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"I really think that had I been in England, I should not have let them the house."

"Do you know, papa, I think that is just English prejudice set against every thing which is not exactly like itself. If there were anything really bad about the Signora, do you think she would come and settle in an obscure cottage in a neighbourhood where nobody knows, but everybody suspects, her."

"If she wished for concealment she would choose the first, Henrietta, and, under those circumstances, could hardly avoid the second," replied my father.

"I shall certainly try and find out more about her," was my conclusion.

"Very well; but till you have, I trust you will not insist upon an acquaintance. I cannot consent."

I went back to the drawing room dissatisfied; but the thing was put out of my head, by finding Emily Dering and Edward singing

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duets to Grace. We spent a pleasant afternoon, and my brother and I walked back with Emily before our dinner.

I caught a glimpse of the Signora as we passed the cottage, and as we returned I told Edward what I had heard and guessed. He took my father's views; was persuaded that the mother was some retired *cantatrice*, and suggested that perhaps the daughter was come down to look for an establishment.

"May be she is contemplating making a conquest of Suffield," said he, laughing.

"Then she reckons without her host," was my quick answer.

"Very likely. Suffield is going to his own place the day after to-morrow; did he tell you so?"

"No,—what for, shooting? I suppose Stuart will be home soon."

The next day was the last of August, and Stuart would of course be home for the partridge shooting. As yet we hardly knew where

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he was, but when we had last heard he was in Greece.

The following morning St. John Suffield himself brought the books Grace wanted, and after a little conversation, it appearing that Edward wanted to go out on business, he offered to read to us in his place. I felt sure the proposal was made as much for my sake as for Grace; he knew it would relieve me, and on its being accepted, he spent the next hour in this occupation.

When the reading ceased, he mentioned that he was to leave Cheslyn early the next day, having a long-standing engagement with some friends to go to his property for a week's shooting; but on his return he hoped he might be allowed to continue, at least occasionally, such a pleasant occupation. We both accepted the offer with pleasure. He read very well, and there were other motives for making him welcome.

"But I hope by the time you come home,"

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said Grace, "I shall not be so much on this sofa. I am to go out to-day in the carriage, and perhaps may be walking about in a week or two."

"I trust you may," replied he, "but you will not walk *all* day. I hope you will have a pleasant drive, it will be quite an event to you."

"Indeed it will. Henrietta means to get a little pony phaeton like yours, to drive me about in; will not that be delicious?"

"Very enjoyable, I have no doubt. But you must be careful in the choice of the ponies, Miss Moore; they are sometimes such unmanageable little animals."

"Your mother's are beauties," I answered, "and go remarkably well."

"Yes; but ponies mostly are narrow-minded animals; their intellect has been dwarfed, like their stature, and that makes them uncertain."

Grace laughed at the idea.

"The mind of a horse," said she, "would it

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be a compliment to tell one they had such an intellect?"

"Well, don't you think horses are generous, noble-minded animals?" said Mr. Suffield, "capable of affection, gratitude, and other good qualities; whilst ponies show their littleness by violent caprices, obstinacy, and self-will, or fickleness, which are all the proofs of narrow minds."

I don't think I quite liked this speech. I had a sort of perception that he thought me capricious and fickle, and Mr. Suffield took leave while I was meditating on it.

A day or two after this, the next time I saw Lady Suffield in fact, she spoke about the ponies again. She was thinking of parting with hers, and she understood I wanted a pair. I knew that was St. John's doing, and I was extremely gratified; but Grace demurred when she heard it, and tried hard to dissuade me from accepting the offer, which she believed was made out of kindness to herself.

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But Lady Suffield was so obligingly willing to part with them, and really made it seem so much as if the kindness were to herself, that coupled with my strong wish to possess the animals, I thought I could not refuse, and before the son came back from Dorsetshire I was mistress of an equipage, in which it was Grace's delight to be driven out every day, either by me or Emily. Not unfrequently Edward went with us instead of a groom, and we certainly enjoyed these drives very much.

Stuart came home early in September; the last news he had had from home he had picked up *poste-restante* at Paris, and this had contained all the events of the last two months. The first effect of the shock had perhaps slightly worn off; but he was looking so ill and unhappy as greatly to distress us all. His health seemed seriously affected; his spirits were quite gone, and although he shot and visited, and talked, it was without zest or energy. It made me miserable to see him,

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and after a few days I could not help inquiring what was the matter.

Stuart tried to deny everything; then said he was perhaps upset by seeing Grace; then complained that he had hurt his health by over-exertions in Greece and the Levant: but I knew that these alone were not the causes of that worn look, or that absolute unnatural depression.

He told me at last it was debt. He had spent a good deal more money than he ought ever since he was fifteen. I knew that very well, and two years ago when my father had paid all his debts, he had told him it was for the last time; that he could not, with due regard to his brother and sister, help him more; there was already a heavy mortgage on Cheslyn Grange, and other difficulties which tied his hands, and if he involved himself again, he warned him he must himself pay the penalty, and clear himself as he could.

He certainly had intended to keep clear,

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but somehow he had failed; he was deeper than ever, and unluckily they were debts that he *must* pay; debts of honour! that is, a great part of them were. The others were trifles compared with these, and tradesmen could wait!

"Now, Henrietta, there is no help for it,—I must marry!"

"Marry!" I exclaimed; "my dear Stuart, marry whom?"

"That's the bore of it," exclaimed he. "Though I don't want to be married at all, if I could please myself it would not be so detestable; but Henrietta, I must have money! without it I cannot afford the luxury: and with it—for pity's sake, do suggest somebody with a good fortune, who would be tolerable. I can think of nobody but one of the Miss Wilkinsons—the great silk mercer's daughters."

"Silk mercers!—never. My dear Stuart, impossible! throw yourself away in such a

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marriage! How in the world did you come even to know of such people?"

"Oh, I met them in London, and I can tell you they are not girls to be despised. They are well educated, and nice looking—one quite pretty. The connection would be bad. They have no other objection."

"Quite objection enough, Stuart. I could not stand it."

"I will not insist on them if you will find somebody else, with money. But something must be done!"

I repeated over and over again that it was very sad—very unlucky, but what could be done? I don't think it entered either of our heads, that it was more wrong than unfortunate. Stuart was quite as far from blaming himself as I was, and grieved over an unpleasant necessity, as if he had been a martyr to the family welfare, not a victim to his own selfish thoughtlessness.

I promised to think about it for him, and

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he having confided his troubles to me, shook off half their weight, and dashed into gay occupation, society, sporting, whatever the neighbourhood afforded, to cheer himself up.

It was a gay autumn to us. Now that Grace was better, and we were able to go out again, we had numbers of invitations from our old acquaintance; all the welcoming parties and engagements which had waited for our leisure. The Archery Club, too, set up its claims. The September meeting and the attendant ball could not do without my brother's and my patronage.

The two last meetings for the season were generally the best, more families were in the country, and those who had been worn out by a London season, had by that time perhaps recovered their spirits. Partridges for one day, with most young men, could be left in peace, and the less destructive bow, with its attendants, mirth and society, might be substituted for the noisy but more solitary pleasures of the gun and pointers.

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Our club was a very good one; comprising most of the families of distinction in that part of the county, and we were very jealous of admitting any members who had not an indisputable title to rank as aristocratic. Now that the fashion has had its day, and the whole thing has fallen into that comparative oblivion which is pretty generally the ultimate fate of amusements once the rage, it would seem absurd to repeat the pitiful tales of intrigue and ill-nature, of vanity and pride, which were manifest in the efforts to obtain a place in the club, or to exclude unwelcome competitors. I will let these stories die their natural death! they shall sink into the obscurity which has overshadowed their cause and their result.

I don't know whether we were more frivolous than the present generation of young people; we had a different style of amusement; floricultural shows and philosophical lectures were not thought of; there were no industrial exhibitions, to attract crowds;

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charitable fancy fairs were unknown. It was not the fashion to build schools or teach in them; young ladies who wanted to be charitable visited the poor people quietly perhaps; and older ones were just beginning to find a resource alike for energy and a love of management in village clothing clubs, and a few notions of the sort.

But young people spent their days mostly in diversion—getting together whenever they could, and having as much laughing and flirting, dancing and music as time and opportunity afforded, giving and bestowing admiration and amusement, and not looking forward to any other manner of life. Such at least was the class to which I belonged; such our mode of life!

It was settled that we should attend the archery meeting. Grace made a great point of it, and even promised herself to join our party; she had been so rapidly recovering her strength that there seemed no reason why she should not. She was to go with us to the

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ground, and when she was tired my mother would take her away, leaving me under the chaperonage of Lady Suffield, who, with her daughters, was to be there. They hoped St. John would be back by that time! but his stay had been prolonged beyond what was expected at first, and the period of his return was still doubtful. I was rather anxious on this point, and felt that the archery meeting without him would want a great charm.

Grace tried to persuade Emily Dering to attend it; we could have taken her easily, and would if she would have consented, but Emily shook her head. "It did not suit them to mix in society beyond what their own village afforded," she said; "mamma had already refused many obliging offers of the sort for her; there were several people who would have taken her out to parties with no other expense than what the toilette necessitated, but they had steadily refused."

"It is all very well and very kind," she continued, "to think of me, and whilst I am

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young and ornamental, as well as useful, I daresay as you suggest, the favour is not entirely on one side; but I shall not always have these advantages, and if in the meantime I acquire a taste for society, which I cannot gratify, I shall be so much the worse off. I don't want to lay up a store of discontent and inane frivolity for my old age."

"Your old age, Emily," said I, laughing; "what a way you have of talking!"

"My dear Emily," said Grace, "if you live to be a hundred, you will always be welcome, both as an object of ornament and use."

"Well, I don't know that," said she, with a face of consideration that amused me. "However, I shall keep to my sulky, stupid resolution, and content myself with enjoying your party second hand."

I wondered a moment whether Mr. Ormond had anything to do with this resolution. In spite of Emily's protestations, I fancied sometimes there was a *penchant* there; she was so very active in his parish, and generally spoke

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of him with a degree of consideration—deference, I might say, which to my fancy indicated something peculiar; for in himself he was a plain, matter-of-fact young man, with nothing of romance or interest, but a great propensity to run into difficulties, and give unintentional offence to his neighbours by his want of tact.

I saw that Emily did a great deal of his work for him, and thought that since she was so well fitted to be useful herself, and to take care of him, she might be influenced by her benevolence to assume the charge. It never occurred to me that she respected him for his office, notwithstanding his deficiencies. I was apt to judge others pretty much by myself.

"I cannot help laughing," said Grace, presently, "at your prevision, Emily, that you, who are so active and useful, so industrious and energetic in acquiring knowledge, who have such infinite resources of intellect, and such stores of information, that you should be afraid of acquiring too strong a taste for

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dissipation, that you should fear to sink into frivolous inanity, is so ludicrous a proposition, it amuses me."

"You are welcome to the amusement, Grace," said Emily, "but don't you remembered somebody says 'we know what we are, we know not what we may be.' Whilst it is yours and Henrietta's duty to go abroad in your station of life, it is mine to stay at home!"

"And fight Mr. Ormond's battles?" said I, with a little shade of mischief, but Emily took no notice.

I am not going to describe the archery meeting; indeed I only mention it for its consequences, or it might sink into oblivion.

St. John Suffield returned in time for it—that was something to me; I was half-amused as the thought passed through my mind, of the way in which I had once spoken of this family, and the changes time brought about; I who had scorned them in idea, was not sorry now to belong to Lady Suffield's party, or to

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receive her son's attentions. I believe as much as he could he distinguished my sister, which was but natural, considering how much her misfortune called for attention; but Grace did not remain long amongst us; she was not yet very strong, and my mother was anxious she should not over-exert herself. After she went I had a good deal of conversation with St. John. He made so many enquiries about what we had been doing, reading, talking about. How had Miss Dering settled the affair with Mr. Pool? Was there a better prospect of peace? About this latter subject I was ashamed to say I knew almost nothing; much as we saw of Emily, our conversation did not often turn on village politics, or parochial squabbles. For the clergyman's difficulties I cared nothing in themselves, and in Emily's philanthrophy or patriotism, or whatever were her reigning motives, I had no share.

But it struck me that perhaps he could tell me something about the Signora, for it was to him I had first heard her mentioned, so I

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abruptly demanded if he could tell me who she was. Mr. Suffield seemed to be a little surprised by my questions; he said he really knew hardly anything of the ladies. They were foreigners; they were Roman Catholics, that was nearly all he knew. Few people could tell much more.

I asked if he had any reason to doubt their being respectable.

No, he said; he had never heard anything to their prejudice in that particular. People made surmises, but they had no foundation that he knew of, and Mrs. Trevennen had assured him that she knew something about them, and could answer for their respectability.

Mrs. Trevennen I knew was of the same faith with these foreigners, and I eagerly asked if she visited them.

Mr. Suffield said no; it was, she said, too far for her to go easily, and as she had no personal acquaintance with the Signora, she had not undertaken it. Indeed, she under-

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stood Signora Mentesi had no wish for visitors, which had prevented her even proposing it; she had only heard of them from a common friend.

No wish for visitors! my curiosity was all the more piqued and excited by that announcement, and I resolved to obtain some gratification to it at all events. I knew Mrs. Trevennen very slightly, but quite enough for my purpose; and I sought her out when there was an opportunity.

I soon turned the conversation to the Italian strangers, and endeavoured to obtain some information which would justify my perverse inclination to know them. Mrs. Trevennen told me readily all she knew; they were natives, at least the mother was, of the north of Italy. The Signora had married an Englishman, but he had been dead many years, and for some family reasons, she had resumed her own name. Mrs. Trevennen had never heard what the husband had been called. She had been left with one son, who was in priest's

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orders, and the daughter, Signorina Caterina, of whom I had heard. The son was in Italy, she believed. She had never seen any of them. She understood the mother and daughter had come over about some money business, and were not likely to stay after that was settled, but how long it would be first, Mrs. Trevennen could not guess.

I did not conceal my strong inclination to form an acquaintance with these Italian ladies; it really must have been a sort of monomania, an infatuation that possessed me; the more obstacles there appeared in my way, the more was I bent on following it up.

This was not the only incident of that afternoon.

The Suffields had friends staying with them, to whom we were introduced at this party; I did not pay much attention to them; they were two plain women, the youngest looked thirty, handsomely dressed, but otherwise unattractive. They were some sort of cousins of their hosts, and bore the name of Elson. I

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was surprised to see Stuart earnestly paying attentions to one of these Miss Elsons, which it appeared to me, neither her charms, nor her years were fitted to elicit. I took an opportunity of asking what he meant, what inducement he found to this line of conduct? He laughed and denied the charge, then told me she was very attractive, and finally ended with confiding to me that he had heard on good authority that these sisters had at least fifty thousand pounds a-piece.

This was the secret of his attentions. I looked at them now with more interest, and heard with satisfaction that these ladies were to remain some days at Cheslyn Grange. I have sometimes wondered whether it were so to others, but it has seemed to me as if an evil wish indulged, were always followed by the means of gratification temptingly displayed. We had but recently concluded between us, that Stuart's affairs required a marriage to set them right, and here suddenly was placed before him, the object for which he had been

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planning; he was brought into contact with wealth, as though to afford the advantages he sought; and if there were drawbacks which lessened its value, they were not of a nature to cause much hesitation. There was no objection to the family of these ladies; the connection was as irreproachable on that score, as it was desirable on others, and we had only to persuade ourselves that the difference of years did not so much signify. Perhaps her age gave him an advantage in one respect, a better chance of winning her; single women over thirty often do the most foolish things in the matrimonial line. They grow impatient of their state; they fret at seeing their youth pass away, and no suitor appear,—they become desperate, and catch at any chance. Then they marry unadvisedly; if they have money perhaps they unite themselves with some comparative boy; if they are poor they are glad to sell themselves to some grey-headed man. I have seen it numbers of times in the course of my life, and I have seen,

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too, the misery which may ensue. I do not know how it can be cured! how women will ever be persuaded of the disgrace, the degradation which attends this restless seeking for a matrimonial engagement. It seems to me (but then I am not a philosopher), the result of natural causes; it is like the promotion to which men look forward in their professions; it is the step which gives them social rank and consideration. Without that step they will probably sink into nothingness and contempt; with it—they may be miserable, but they have escaped the obloquy of insignificance. How often they may think the rank dearly bought; how often they may sigh for the retirement and freedom of single life, one cannot say, but unless women's minds become very differently constituted from what they have hitherto been, or unless the other sex will take a more liberal and generous tone with regard to single women, I believe all the books now written to persuade women of their innate dignity, their mission, their rights, and their powers, will have but little

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influence on them. I fear they will continue to prefer respectable slavery, to despised independence; and attribute these wise books to the pens of disappointed old maids, whose conduct would contradict their theories if the power were given them. I never hear women talk of their independence, without suspecting that they have escaped all temptation to surrender it.

But I am falling into a moralizing strain, as dull as it is useless. To return; I wished Stuart success in his pursuit, was introduced to the ladies in question, took some pains to please them, and judging from the reception they gave me, was not unsuccessful.

Poor Grace was looking very sad and pale the next morning; her eyebrows were red, and I learnt from her maid that she had been crying a great deal in the night. All the lively stories, the amusing anecdotes which I had been treasuring for her diversion, vanished from my mind at the sight of her sad face. We asked eagerly and anxiously if she felt ill.

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No, she was a little tired, that was all. I saw she disliked being questioned; there was even a tone of impatience in her answers, quite unusual. She evidently tried to seem cheerful before my mother, but when she left the room, even that effort was laid aside, and more than once I perceived the tears stealing from under her eyelashes, as she lay on the sofa silent and motionless.

She would not talk, wished for neither reading nor music, and wrapped herself up in mournful contemplation. I did not know what to do, and my mother seemed even more puzzled and distressed. I was sitting by the open window when I saw St. John crossing the lawn, I stepped out to meet him. He came to propose a continuation of the reading which he had commenced just before leaving home, but I told him how little Grace seemed disposed for any conversation or employment; he might come in and speak to her, I said but I did not imagine she would allow him to read.

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His countenance changed at my narrative, he looked much distressed, and hesitated.

"Perhaps I had better not see her," said he; "I could not expect—but do you think she would like my sister or mother to come to her? What can be the matter? I hope it is only exhaustion from the exertion of yesterday; she was looking so well and lively, and seemed enjoying herself so much."

"I was thinking of your mother; would she like to come to her? There is nobody like Lady Suffield for comforting and encouraging one."

His eyes flashed with pleasure on me. "I am so glad you appreciate her," he exclaimed with warmth; "I am sure if you think she could be of the slightest use, I could promise."

"Perhaps Grace might tell her what is vexing her. I could tell her anything, I know; and I think Grace does not like to speak to us, for fear of distressing us more. I cannot

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help thinking, that first going into society again, and becoming more sensible of her privation, has affected her spirits in this way. She had become accustomed to us; but being with so many people whom she could only hear; being spoken to in a sort of compassionate way, that provoking wretches will use when they address her, and then being so unable to join in the diversion of which she was so fond, all this has, I fear, given her a new sense of her loss, and shown her how real, how great it is."

"I fear so," said he, looking at me with an expression in which I could read a blending of admiration and sympathy he seldom bestowed on me.

"People don't understand how to pity her," I continued, "they are constantly reminding her of her misfortune. Miserable bunglers come up and express surprise, or adopt a tone of commiserating wonder at her being able to come out, or the irritating and officious zeal

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they show to help her, instantly recalls how she differs from others. I have no patience with them often."

"I must put in a word for good intentions, even if awkward and ill-judged; I speak for myself, you know, as well as my neighbours. We all feel for your sister, but only custom can give the tact and readiness with which Miss Moore can administer to her feelings."

"You! Mr. Suffield; you always manage well; you never make a fuss about moving things out of her way, or express anxiety, or make mute signs, which annoy her so much if she suspects them. I have wondered where you learnt your experience."

"Well, I will go back and ask my mother to come down," said he, as if to cut me short, "I will bring her if I may, and then perhaps I may see your sister."

He went home again, and I returned to the drawing-room. Presently Stuart came in.

"Henrietta," said he, "I hope you will

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call on those Miss Elsons, it will be only civil, as the Suffields are so neighbourly."

His eyes were flashing with fun as he said this, and I could read all the covert meaning of his speech. I agreed of course to his proposition.

"What do you think of it, Grace," said I, going up and leaning over her, "shall we call at the Grange this afternoon when we drive out, or would you prefer driving with Emily whilst I do it?"

"I don't know the Miss Elsons, and I don't think I shall drive to-day at all," was her answer.

Stuart raised his eyebrows, and then made me a sign to leave her, intimating that she was cross. I knew better, but he never could or would understand Grace, and his high spirits and the engrossing nature of his own plans, prevented his giving her very much of his time.

"Miss Marianne Elson said yesterday she should like to learn to shoot," said he, addres-

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sing me; "now as the Suffields have our targets and our avenue, I think the least they can do is to allow us to join them there. We could get up some nice enough parties if they would help—a sort of village club. Their party and ours, and we could have your pretty friend Emily Dering, and then Ormond I dare say would join now and then, and he has a cousin just coming to him, a Captain Ormond, who, no doubt, would be glad enough of it."

"How do you know, Stuart?" said I, surprised at his hearing anything about the clergyman or his visitors.

"Oh, I met him this morning and he told me; he asked me if I would transfer the day's shooting which I offered him, to his cousin, who would value it more; so I found he had a cousin, and mean to suggest the long bow instead of the fowling piece, at least sometimes as an exchange."

"Really, Stuart, you are exemplary in your philanthropical endeavours for the amusement

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of your neighbours," said I, laughing, and arching my eyebrows; "such disinterested zeal deserves a public acknowledgment."

"I am too humble to wish for that," he answered in the same tone, "if my efforts to please are crowned with success, that is all I crave in return."

"Is there nothing else in my power to do for you?" pursued I.

"You must make my mother ask the Grange party to dinner, now St. John Suffield is come back; and then, if you include the two gentlemen at the Vicarage, we can lay our plans before them without awkwardness."

"All your plans?" I asked, with affected simplicity; a question to which he made no answer.

My mother came into the room just then, so Stuart and I went out on the lawn to talk with more unreserve, and were earnestly discussing probabilities and chances, schemes and hopes, when the Suffields, mother and son, made their appearance. Stuart, after

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saying some civilities, went off; he always declared that Lady Suffield was a monstrous good woman, but a great bore; and although perfectly polite to her, he never sought her society.

We three went into the drawing-room. Grace had roused herself to talk to my mother; she was sitting up, and looking brighter, but I could see it was a constraint. The object now was to allow her to have a free conversation with Lady Suffield, without suspecting they were thrown together by design. I sat impatiently planning how this should be, when the servant came to announce the carriage was at the door; and at the same moment Emily Dering entered.

"Are you not going out, mamma?" said Grace. "I know you have some shopping to do, and I wish you would take Emily to get me the lambswool for knitting. She can choose it, because she knows what I want."

My mother hesitated about leaving Lady Suffield.

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"Do not let me keep you," said the latter, "I know your horses don't like standing; I will sit awhile with Grace, if she will give me leave. I think the quiet of a *tête-à-tête* will just suit us both; I came down planning something of the sort."

There was a little demur, and then it was all arranged; Emily went with my mother; so did Edward I found afterwards; he having met them at the door, and we four remained.

"You did not come to read to us this morning," said Grace, turning to where she believed St. John to be, "and we had waited for your return to go on with that book."

There was a tinge of reproach in her tone. He looked at me a little puzzled; and I did not at the moment very well know what to say.

"If I may come to-morrow," said he almost immediately, "I shall be happy to make up for the omission. I was prevented to-day!"

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"Oh no, pray don't trouble yourself; I know you have visitors; I dare say you are busy; you need not think about me at all; Henrietta and I will finish the volume together. I should be sorry to take up your time."

"I will come to morrow," repeated he, "and see whether my pleasure will not be greater than your sorrow. You must permit me!"

I had not thought Grace could be so ungracious as her reply was, yet it was more the tone and accent, than the words. I was sure St. John was hurt; he did not answer, but after a short pause, and exchanging a look with his mother, he said in a careless voice, "I must go home now, mother; I suppose we shall not see you till later in the day, I must wish you good afternoon, Miss Grace."

She let him take her hand, but said not a word; he left the room; and a moment after she stooped and hid her face partly with her hands, partly on the arm of her chair, and

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there were audible sobs. I ran out on the lawn again, through the window, to speak to Mr. Suffield, who was crossing towards the park.

"You will come to-morrow! you will not mind this little pet, Mr. Suffield," I exclaimed eagerly. "Her heart is full now, I never saw her so before; but it is only a passing cloud, you will not think any harm of it."

"You need not apologize, Miss Moore," said he with feeling. "I can see her heart is very sore, and she has lost for a moment her self-control. Something has discomposed her; but it will pass away, I am sure. There is no allowance that is not due to her."

I thanked him, and returned slowly to the drawing-soom. My entrance was inaudible, and I paused at the window not to interrupt the two who sat there.

Grace was sobbing, but now her head was on Lady Suffield's shoulder, and that lady's arm was clasped round her waist.

"You don't know, you cannot guess,"

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were her broken words. "Ah it was yesterday—yesterday in the midst of all that gaiety and bustle that I realised my miserable fate—yesterday when amongst people saying 'how beautiful,' 'how elegant,' what a charming scene—and to me it was all dark—dark—I could not even see the sunshine! it was but a blank—I felt wicked—Lady Suffield; I asked why was I shut up in this dark dungeon, whilst all around were at liberty. And then I heard people point me out, and pity me; and pity my mother—what a burden, what a misfortune to her. They seemed to think that I should not hear because I could not see; and whispered and beckoned, and I knew what they meant, and then some one said, 'oh yes, it is quite hopeless, I understand, she is blind for life,' adding lightly next moment, 'did you ever see such a pretty girl as Miss Browne. It quite does one good to look at her'—I cannot describe the shock."

Her words were cut short by tears again.

"It was thoughtless to say that—but they

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could not tell," said Lady Suffield gently, "and what a stranger may report, does not make your case worse, dear!"

"But is it not so? don't you know it is so? am I not blind for life?"

"God only knows," was the reply, with a kind kiss.

Grace was silent. Lady Suffield went on so gently: "No chastisement for the time seemeth joyous but grievous, and yours, dear Grace, is very grievous, I know it must be; and He knows it too, who sends it. He knows exactly the measure of your strength; and while we pray that this painful trial may pass from you if it is His will, we may know that even if it does not, He can turn your sorrow into peace, and your privation into blessings."

I would not stay to hear more; I went gently away to find Stuart, and pay our promised visit. I had told the Suffields what we intended, and I thought perhaps that was the reason St. John had gone home.

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CHAPTER V.

Moreover what has this world in store
For one like her but tears and toil?
Daughter of sorrow, serf of the soil.
A peasant's child, and peasant's wife,
And her heart within her sick and sore
With all the roughnesses of life.

GOLDEN LEGEND.

"How is your sister this morning," were St. John Suffield's first words, as he presented himself the next day at the time we had agreed on. Grace was not present at the moment.

I told him that she seemed happier; the interview with his mother had done her so much good, that she was quite herself again; or very nearly so.

Just then she came into the room, carrying her bow and quiver in her hands.

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"Look here, Henrietta," said she, "I will give all these to Emily; I shall never want them again." Here was a short sigh—"or if I did—but, however, I will give these to Emily, and then, perhaps, she will sometimes join your party. I am just going to see if they are all perfect."

"Can I not help you to examine them," said Mr. Suffield, advancing and taking them from her; "where do you like to sit," added he, as he drew her hand under his arm, to lead her to a chair.

"*You* here; I did not know that. Oh, by the window, please, there's a low chair I was sitting on. I thought I told you not to come," she added, smiling.

"I did not think you were in earnest," replied he, "perhaps because I felt I did not deserve you should be so. And your sister agreed in my views entirely."

Grace sat down, and drew out her arrows one by one, passing them through her fingers to feel if they were in good order. How

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pretty she looked as she sat there! with her light elegant figure, her finely formed neck and shoulders, her little head and girlish features, rendered still more juvenile in appearance by the cap which the loss of her hair obliged her to wear. She was placed in such a position that the warm light from the window fell on her, in a peculiarly picturesque way, playing as it did through the draperies of climbing plants, which hung festooned from the veranda; her white gown, and the delicate coloured ribbons of her cap, contrasted admirably with the crimson chair back, and bright pink chintz of the curtains behind her. She could not have placed herself to greater advantage, and both Mr. Suffield and I looked at her with an admiration, perfectly visible, and well understood by each.

He read to us till luncheon time; those were pleasant hours.

"Shall we see you to-morrow?" said Grace, as he closed his book.

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"Not at this hour," was his reply, "I must attend the Bench this afternoon; will not you come up to the Grange. The Miss Elsons are so anxious to practice archery, and your brother has undertaken, I understand, to give them lessons. My sisters hope to see you too."

"I am to drive with mama," said Grace. "But, Mr. Suffield, I have not been at the Grange since I came home; except one day when I went into the house."

"I am quite aware of that," he answered, "Why don't you come?"

"I might be in the way," said she, with a sigh just audible; "but if mama likes to come back that way, we can."

"Emily Dering and I are going to make an expedition together to see some wild place in the woods," I observed; "this is to take effect immediately after luncheon; when we come back I will bring her with me, if I may. Grace wants her to learn to shoot too, perhaps you would teach her."

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He was looking at Grace's arrows, as I spoke, thoughtfully examining them.

"I remember these so well," he said, presently. "Yours, Miss Moore, I recollect had pink and gold marks to distinguish them."

Did not I recollect it well too; and my ungracious speeches and contemptuous thoughts? I wondered that we were such good friends now, when I recalled it.

Emily and I drove off together in my pony carriage to pay a sort of reconnoitring visit in a wild locality. Placed in a little green nook of lane, running through a wild copse, was a small wooden hovel, with a thatch picturesque from age, and walls which matched it in raggedness. Here Emily entered; and I followed feeling half-afraid lest it should tumble down on our heads.

The room was bare and poverty-stricken; the earthen floor was worn into holes, the two or three chairs were deficient in legs, backs, or seats; the table was a board, rudely propped

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on rough pieces of wood, and on the hearth were the white ashes of an extinguished fire.

The inhabitants we saw in this dwelling were, first, a suspicious sort of lurcher-dog, who snarled at us angrily, then two half-naked little boys and a bigger girl not much better clad; and finally a rough, gaunt gipsy-looking woman, who was trying to hush a squalling child in her arms.

Emily introduced herself; she had heard, she said, that the woman was poorly, and had a sick child. She thought, perhaps, she could do her good in some way. "This lady," she added, "is Miss Moore, who is anxious to know if she can help you."

This was giving me more credit than I deserved, for the disgusting dirt and untidiness of the whole house had made me only anxious to run away. Emily sat down on a ricketty chair, which she drew closer than I thought prudent to the woman. I stood near the door. I really could not breathe in the hut.

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"I don't know as anybody can do me good," said the woman, in a sulky tone, "this child, he's took ill, and lets me get no sleep nor rest night or day; my husband, he's away looking for work, but if he gets it, it's a chance but he spends all the money in the ale-house, and I never the better. We han't had the first morsel of food to-day, and I don't see no chance of its coming to us; and so p'r'aps I've some right to complain, not as I means to, not I."

"I am very sorry," said Emily, "that I can help you so little, but hearing you were in distress, mama sent you some food. Take this, little boy, and give some to your brother and sister." She drew some food from a basket she had brought with her, and gave it to the shaggy uncouth urchin, who with round eyes, and thumbs stuck in his mouth, was staring at her between his straggling locks of hair.

The child grasped the bread with greedy fingers, and all three retiring into a corner

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began devouring it with sad rapacity. Emily asked if the doctor had seen the sick baby.

"The doctor! ma'am, it's not for the likes of us to have a doctor, that's for you well-to-do folks; no, no, we've nothing to say to he, nor he to we."

"But what a pity that you did not come to the vicarage or to us," said Emily, gently; you would have been sure to have been helped, and it's so sad to think of those children starving in that way."

"Them as has good clothes and good words, can go and get help from grand folks; but them as has no shoes, and sick babies, can't. Your servants, Miss, would drive the like of we away from your doors, as I would a stray dog perchance." The woman's sulkiness seemed only equalled by Emily's persevering sweetness. "I see," she said, "you are badly off, and I daresay you are too poorly to eat this cold food; let me make you a cup of gruel now, you have a kettle and some water I daresay."

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"There's no fire," was the abrupt answer.

"Oh, I'll soon set that right. Only tell me where the wood is."

"What are you going to do, Emily," enquired I, in French, astonished to see her take off her gloves, and proceed to put the ashes on the hearth together.

"I am going to light the fire and boil some water," replied she, aloud, and in English. "Could you not help me," she added, in an under tone; "this poor creature is half-famished, and too weak to do anything herself."

"It is all so dirty," said I, with infinite disgust.

"Never mind, you can change your gown when you get home, and it will wash; do come in," for I still stood ungraciously on the threshold.

Meanwhile the woman had desired her little girl to fetch a handful of wood, and presently Emily was stooping over the kindling sticks, blowing them into a flame. I was amused at the whim, and resolving to help

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her, began to look about for what I could do. We found a pitcher of water, and having filled the kettle, and hung it on the crook, commenced a search for some other utensil in which to boil the gruel. Nothing could we find, but a teapot with a broken spout, two or three cups, and mugs, and a bottle which seemed to have held spirits, but was now empty.

Emily decided that she must give up the gruel, and content herself with tea for the present. She had the materials for both in her basket, and having once overcome my disgust at the dirt, I entered into the spirit of the thing, more I confess as a sort of frolic, than from any compassion to the inhabitants of the hut, and we made between us, the preparations for giving the woman a meal. The stupid indifference with which she sat by, and the want of appreciation which her manner displayed, provoked me a little; but Emily told me not to mind; misery and sickness will

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deaden the mind, and harden all the feelings. The thing was to help her in her need; it mattered very little in what way she took the help.

The cup of tea, (black-looking stuff, with coarse brown sugar to sweeten it which made me shudder) had some effect on her. When Emily presented it with her own sweet looks and graceful ways, the poor creature thawed a little, and seemed first to understand that we were in earnest; especially when Emily took the dirty baby from her arms, and rocked and soothed it, whilst the mother swallowed the tea, so scalding hot that I wondered at her. She spoke more graciously, thanked Emily, and altogether brightened up considerably.

"Why don't you keep your house cleaner and more tidy," said I, struck with the idea that some moral advice would do her good. "And these children have such dirty faces and hands; could you not teach them to wash them?"

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"Aye, your ladyship, I daresay; only if you had a sick baby day and night in your arms, and a sick heart in your breast, with a drunken husband, maybe coming home to quarrel with you, and nothing to give you or your children, but hard words and hard blows, it's a chance but you'd want heart to clean one thing or another. It's easy talking, but doing's another sort of thing I take it."

"Yes, indeed," said Emily, "it must be very hard on you; and they can't come to school, I am afraid."

"Them's all the rags of clothes they has on and if I washes they out, they has to put they on again next morning. It's not easy to keep children clean so, least-ways I don't find it no easy matter; maybe you ladies might manage better."

I did not carry my purse with me, or I should certainly have poured its contents into her hand, and bade her clothe herself and children. As it was, I sat thinking for some minutes in silence.

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"I will come again to-morrow, if I can," said Emily, "and see how you are, and bring something for your baby." And then we came away.

"I am glad we went," said she, as we walked up to the carriage which we had left at a short distance, "they are badly enough off certainly; though I am afraid they cannot be very respectable. I suspect the man is a poacher by profession; I noticed two or three things which looked suspicious in the cottage —that dog in particular."

"She's a handsome woman," I observed, "when she cleared up a little, quite handsome; what can one do for her, Emily? She has such fine eyes."

"I am glad you are interested in her," replied Emily laughing. "I am afraid you would not care much if she had red hair and were freckled; but there's plenty to be done for her, I daresay. Clothes to the children would not be amiss, only she would probably sell

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them for gin, and be no better off. I will talk to Mr. Ormond about her."

"Mr. Ormond again!" I thought, "ah Emily, I know how that will end."

I took Emily to the Grange on our way back, and there we found a large party in the avenue. The ladies, both Suffields and Elsons, with my two brothers, and some other visitors. Some were shooting, some only looking on. Lady Suffield and my mother were doing the latter. I asked where was Grace. She, it appeared, had strolled away with my father to the flower-garden, and St. John Suffield had gone with them.

I left Emily with the others, and went to find—Grace and my father—I said. I never considered appearances, or the conventionalities of society, but just went where I pleased.

They were in the flower-garden. I saw them as I came up; Grace sitting by the edge of the fountain, every now and then dipping her fingers in the water, in a way which

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showed her thoughts did not go with them. St. John was on one side of her; evidently speaking with animation, she was turning towards him, her head uncovered, a little bent down, and her light gauze scarf falling from her shoulders, and with her graceful attitude and plain white dress, she really looked like some nymph of sculpture. He rose and came forward to meet me, the other two sat still.

We sat down again when I joined them, and Grace began asking about our excursion, and I gave a lively account of what we had seen, and done. She was extremely interested, and we began planning help for this woman and her children. First we merely suggested a frock or two, but by degrees the ardour of my benevolence was kindled by talking of them, and I could not be satisfied without new clothing them all; even shoes and stockings was I resolved to furnish, although Mr. Suffield laughed, and said they would not

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wear them, and my father declared that they would only go to the pawn-brokers.

"Indeed," he added, "I shall give the keeper orders to look after these people. They have settled down there in the very heart of my finest preserves, and no doubt but they find a compensation for the loneliness of the place in the products of the woods. Poacher to the back-bone I'll warrant the man, without even seeing him."

This I could not contradict; I could only say I should help the woman all the same, and we were discussing the matter until we rejoined the family under the lime trees.

For two days after that I would hardly do anything but work for these children; with my usual ill-regulated impulse, I gave up everything for the sake of hemming calico, or running breadths of flannel together. I do not recollect that I finished any article; I began at least a dozen, worked till I was tired, and then turned it over to my mother, or the

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maids, to complete. But just as I was in the midst of the new caprice, a circumstance occurred which put charity, poverty, and industry alike out of my head.

I received a note from Mrs. Trevennen stating that though the Signora Mentesi had no wish for society in general, she would be delighted to form the acquaintance of Miss Moore, in whose favor she would make an exception from her general rule, if I had not altered from the feelings I had expressed to Mrs. Trevennen.

I was in raptures. The exception in my favor, the graceful manner of acceding to my wishes, the implied good opinion of me, the very exclusive habits thus broken through, all assisted to flatter my vanity, and make me equally proud and pleased at this sudden realisation of my desires.

But it was necessary first to gain my father's consent, for he had expressed his opinion too plainly for me to act directly contrary. His known wishes I could disregard, but his con-

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sent in words I did require, no matter how reluctantly given; the form was necessary for my conscience, even though wrung from him by importunity which testified against me.

I told him at once of this note, repeated all that Mrs. Trevennen had said, and appealed to St. John who was present to verify my words.

Mr. Suffield did not support me very readily; he looked grave, almost displeased. My father was extremely dissatisfied, but I argued so pertinaciously about the claims of politeness, and Mrs. Trevennen, and the Signora; about his tenants, liberality, hospitality and good breeding, that he gave way, said I might do as I pleased, he hoped I should not repent it, and then walking away, left St. John Suffield and me to a tête à tête.

My conscience was not quite satisfied with what had passed, but I wanted to persuade myself that it was all right, and walking to a table near where my companion was standing, I began to arrange some flowers in a vase, whilst I said in a careless tone.

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"I am glad papa has consented so easily; after what passed it was impossible to draw back without unpardonable rudeness to Mrs. Trevennen."

He made no answer in words, but his silence was expressive enough; it provoked and vexed me.

"You ought to be concerned for my paying this visit, too, Mr. Suffield," I went on wishing to make him speak, "for you contributed much to interest me in this family, by what you said about them. Your guarantee of their respectability led me to speak to Mrs. Trevennen."

"I am sorry I should have said anything which led to such disagreeable consequences," said he, in a tone that expressed even more than his words, "if I had had the least idea—" he stopped short.

"Of what," said I leaving the flowers, and walking up straight to him. He looked out of the window, and was still silent. I saw he disapproved of my proceedings, and I valued

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his good opinion, but I had an infatuated longing to form this new acquaintance, an intense desire for which I could give no rational account, The two motives were so nearly equal that a little impulse would turn the scale either way. I believe if St. John had spoken out then, told me his opinion openly and advised me not to go, I should have yielded to his influence. Why did he not? what has not his silence cost me? and yet what right have I to blame him? He saw the motives which ought to have swayed me had no power, he saw me refuse to yield to advice which ought to have had the weight of a command; he might well hesitate to think that words of his would have proved more effectual, or declined, even if he had suspected it, to exert an influence of which he was quite unambitious.

"Tell me your opinion, Mr. Suffield," said I, "of this visit; do you think I ought not to pay it?"

"Excuse me, Miss Moore, I do not pretend

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to be a judge of the etiquette of visits between ladies, and my opinion, if I had any, would be worth nothing!"

"Nonsense! that is not the question. I am not talking of etiquette; I am referring to an individual case. Ought I not to pay this visit, now my father has given me leave; is there any harm in it?"

"I trust you will find none."

"You don't answer to the point, Mr. Suffield. Do you consider me to blame for wishing it?"

"You cannot wish me to blame you, I am sure."

His answers were all in the same provokingly calm tone, of which I could positively make nothing. They expressed no interest.

"If you thought I deserved it, you ought to blame me. I really wish for your opinion."

"And I must again beg you to excuse me, Miss Moore."

"You are not kind—you are not friendly,

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Mr. Suffield," said I, pettishly: "to give a useful opinion, one which would influence on an important subject, is only an act of charity."

"It might be, had you no one better qualified to advise you; but with parents whom you can consult, and who I know have considered the matter, it would be presumptuous and preposterous in me to intrude mine. If it agreed with theirs it would be useless; if it differed it would be presumptuous."

"You should have been a diplomatist, Mr. Suffield," said I, in a voice which must have betrayed my vexation; "you are so skilful at concealing your thoughts in your words. Perhaps you think it wisest to keep your influence for great occasions, and will not condescend to so small a subject as considering the right and wrong of my conduct. I am too insignificant."

"No," said he, with a half-smile, "you forget the laws of attraction. It is the greater

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bodies which influence the smaller, and regulate their motions. Does not this settle the question?"

"Try," said I, in as careless a tone as I could command.

"I will not!" was his positive answer. I was so angry—so provoked, both with him and myself, and with everything around me, that I went straight out of the room, and hurrying up stairs, equipped myself as speedily as possible, and walked down to the village. I was in hopes he would pass me on my way, but I saw nothing of him, and as it was too early to pay a first visit, I went into the Derings to take luncheon with them, intending to call at Laurel Cottage afterwards.

When I think over that time, and the step which had such an unexpected influence on my future fate, I cannot but wonder at the mad perverseness of my conduct, and the many hindrances or checks which were placed in my way to save me, had I been willing to be saved from my own selfish and self-willed fancies.

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I have no right to complain. I believe a miracle alone would have stopped me.

At the Derings, I met Lady Suffield; she was consulting with Emily and her mother about the woman in the hut, whom we had visited. I believe she was ill, and with her profligate husband and young children, and not a neighbour near, was of course as badly off as possible. They were considering what was to be done for her. I seemed to listen, but my thoughts were wandering. I really now do not know what they planned or proposed. I was thinking of St. John and our conversation.

First I was vexed with him for so positively refusing to take an interest in my resolutions; then I was still more vexed with myself for having offered him an influence which he would not use, having implied that I cared for his opinion, more than he cared for my conduct. I was dreadfully annoyed, and resolved to show that I did not really allow his unspoken censure to have any weight, I de-

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termined that nothing should now prevent me from making this acquaintance. I suppose Lady Suffield observed my wandering looks and air of abstraction, for when the other matters were settled, she turned to me, and asked me kindly what was there wrong? Was I ill? I assured her this was not the case, so far from it, I was particularly happy, for an object for which I had long wished was just put in my power. I had received permission to call on the Mentesis, and I intended to form their acquaintance immediately.

"My dear child," exclaimed Lady Suffield, surprised, "do you mean it? do you know what you are doing? surely you are jesting."

I laughed at her wonder, and protested I was never more in earnest. The Signora had consented to my visit, and I was now on my way there.

But how did the Signora know of my wishes was the question suggested by the three ladies, to which I replied by another, asking why I should not, or could not, do so simple a

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thing as visit a neighbour, without all this outcry and remonstrance.

"Outcry!" repeated Lady Suffield, smiling, "why I have only asked a very simple question or two."

"Well, that is true," rejoined I, having nearly betrayed myself by my pettish remarks; "but I know by your way that you are going to remonstrate and exclaim. I see it in your face."

"Well, I must say I don't think it a prudent acquaintance, whatever Mrs. Trevennen may say—she really knows nothing, except what the priest tells her, and perhaps they are not always to be entirely depended on, when speaking of members of their own faith."

"Nothing venture—nothing have," replied I, pertinaciously, "if I do not like the family I can draw back after trying; there is nothing more easy than dropping an acquaintance."

"I am more afraid of your liking them too well, my dear Miss Moore," said Lady Suffield. "I should fear much less for you from their

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proving vulgar, or unpleasing, than from their being fascinating and delightful."

"Why in the world?" demanded I, amazed. "There's no man Mentesi to fall in love with."

"It is their creed I fear," answered Lady Suffield gravely; "and I dread the influence they may obtain over you in that way, more than I should any chance of winning your heart."

"Oh, do you think they intend to convert me? Upon my word, Lady Suffield, I did not expect such want of charity from you. I see—you think because I am an heiress, and so forth, that they are scheming to entrap me, make me take the veil, and give over my fortune to the church. But I will not do that, I promise you, my liberty is too dear."

"Do not promise anything, you do not know, Miss Moore; I am sure that with your impulsive nature and lively imagination, they will find no bad foundation to work on; they possibly have studied your disposition as well as your prospects."

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"Just as likely that they have studied my character, and thought I should be a pleasant acquaintance. You mortify me, Lady Suffield, by supposing my money is the bait. Emily, is she not hard on a poor young woman? Do stand up for me? Did not my face attract you the first moment you saw me? Did you not mentally say, may she be my friend?"

"I will say so," said Emily, laughing, "if you will say as much for me when necessary."

"I do not like what I know of those ladies' characters," said Mrs. Dering, "it seems harsh to say so, but I do think they have a peculiar talent for making mischief, which is dangerous."

"I believe I am not to be trusted to give an opinion," said Emily, "for if you take shelter under the laurel bough, I feel you will give less time to the Ivy, and we shall be tormented with knowing you next door, and not being able to see you. My feelings, therefore, must be mute."

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Had St. John Suffield only condescended to express half the interest on the subject which his mother avowed, I should perhaps have been saved. Perhaps!—I dearly loved my own way, and on impartial consideration, I am not quite clear, had I felt any tolerable certainty that his happiness was in my keeping, that I might not have still persisted in my self-willed notions, either for the sake of teazing him, or trying my power. It was better for him, far better, as it was. He was too wise to surrender his heart to a character so uncertain as mine then was; and he had not, I acknowledge, at that time given me any reason to imagine that I influenced him.

After luncheon, as soon as I decently could, I issued out to make my visit next door. I felt quite excited as I walked up the gravel pathway to the house. There was nothing of beauty on the outside, no flowers, no climbing plants, no attempt at ornament.

The door was opened by a demure looking

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elderly woman, a foreigner apparently, but speaking tolerable English, better indeed than many country people do. She said the ladies were at home, and I was shewn into a rather dark apartment, where I was left alone. It was much such a room as the drawing-room of the Derings, but looking very differently. The windows were screened with draperies which would have defied all intrusive eyes, the furniture was scanty, old-fashioned, and ill-assorted; there were no books visible, and nothing to soften the office-like appearance of the room, excepting a grand piano, which stood open, and on which was some music, as if it had been recently used. I went up to look at the instrument; it was handsome, and by one of the best makers of the day. There were also some prints and a few pictures hung on the wall, chiefly sacred subjects; but there were one which I felt sure contained portraits, one figure was a boy, almost a young man, with long bright hair hanging round his animated face, and an expression which was sin-

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gularly pleasing, as, with a deep, serious look, he pointed with one hand to the crucifix he held in the other, and seemed to be addressing his companion in an earnest persuasive tone. She was a girl, his junior evidently, with something of his features, and the same complexion, but nothing of the spiritual expression of the eye and mouth; a much more common, and yet a handsome, face.

But there was something in the painting which attracted me, and I was gazing at it fixedly, when I heard a step behind, and turned to meet the signora.

I knew who she was directly, knew her by the black flashing eyes, the high features, the noble carriage, the proud glance. There was a stateliness in her reception, an air almost of haughtiness, which reminded me that my admission was granted as a favor, that they could and would have done without me, but for my express wishes.

It was so new to me to meet with any one who did not at least appear to be anxious for

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my acquaintance, and to consider it an honor, that it quite took me by surprise when I met Madame Mentesi.

Her pride seemed to make mine shrink into humility, and I felt as if I must offer some apology for intruding, not listen to thanks for the pleasure of my visit.

She glanced at the picture before which I had been standing, and I felt sure they were her children represented there from that look; but she said nothing on the subject, only in good English, though with a foreign accent, making the ordinary formal salutation, and asking me to be seated. I took one of those stiff, spider-legged hair cloth cushioned chairs, which might have been made for my grandmother, and sat down. I seemed under a spell, whilst those keen black eyes were overlooking me so stedfastly.

"It is very kind of you to visit us, Miss Moore," said the signora, presently, "but it had not been my intention to admit any acquaintance in England, where I am only kept

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by business, had not one who knew you formerly, induced me to change my mind in your behalf."

"Mrs. Trevennen?" said I.

"I do not know Mrs. Trevennen," replied she, coldly, "it was a countrywoman of my own who mentioned you to me, the Countess de Catana, whom, I believe you met at Florence."

"Oh, yes, I remember the countess well; she was a very charming woman; you know her then?"

"She is a dear friend of mine, and a most kind second mother to my children; especially my son," here she glanced at the picture again, "who perhaps you may know is at Florence now."

"Mrs. Trevennen told me your son was abroad," I answered, almost feeling that I ought not to have known anything about him.

"She told you, no doubt," continued she, bending her eyes on me again, "that he had

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followed the vocation, which even at the early age when that portrait was painted, he announced, that he has triumphed over the worldly temptations which beset a young man of family, and taken up the cross he is recommending to his sister so earnestly."

Again my eyes went to the picture, and I looked with still more interest on the countenance of the young man, whilst seeing Madame Mentesi waited for an answer, I murmured—

"Yes, she told me that he is a priest in the Catholic Church."

Somehow I did not like this severe and solemn way of catechising me; she overawed me. I felt uncomfortable, and inclined to draw back.

Just then, however, her daughter entered the room with a light step and merry face.

"*Mamma-mia*," she exclaimed; then seeing me, stopped abruptly, drew up, and curtsied gracefully.

"Miss Moore, my child," said the mother, then rising and taking her hand, she led her

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to me and said, with a courtesy quite captivating; "Miss Moore, let me present my daughter to you. Caterina, here is perhaps the only young lady of this country with whom I can wish you to make acquaintance, with whom, if she will condescend so far, I should be glad to see you friends."

Caterina blushed and smiled, and looked up under her eyelids as she held out her hand in a way which seemed to me full of innocent *naïveté*. I cordially took her hand, and drawing her towards me, performed the very un-English action of touching her cheek with mine.

"Ah, how you honour and delight me!" said she, in a lively tone. "Oh, mamma, how happy I am; my dreams have come true; and I see in our house one whom—" and here she stopped short, and colouring again, looked down as if in confusion.

"My silly child," said Madame Mentesi, "had formed most exalted ideas of her father's

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country people before she came to England, and would, had I allowed it, have run into intimacy with the first fair English girl she met. But as my maternal solicitude prevented that, ever since your return home, her great wish has been to know you."

"My wish is only half-realised as yet," said Caterina; "much as I wished to know Miss Moore, I wished still more to be loved by her."

"Perhaps had you known Miss Moore better," said I, gratified both by her words and manner, "you might not have formed so foolish a wish."

"Perhaps had we known her better, we might have hesitated less at yielding to it," said the Signora.

"Ah, mamma says you English are so cold, so money-loving, so what you call speculating, that if I sought you, as I wanted to do, you would say it was because you were so rich."

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"Hush, my imprudent child!" interposed the mother; "forgive her, she has known few but her mother, and has never learnt disguise."

"Miss Moore will not be angry, I know," said Caterina, taking my hand again, "mamma feared the *heiress* would be proud and suspicious, but when we heard your character from our dear countess, we thought we might venture to trust you."

How strangely this answered the doubts which Lady Suffield had suggested. I triumphed as I thought how unconsciously Caterina showed me I was right.

"What made you think about me?" asked I, with natural curiosity.

"Think of you!" cried Caterina, raising her hands; "how could we help it?"

"How, indeed," added the equally energetic but more dignified mother; "could we live here without thinking of you? Hearing your name in every mouth, your praises quoted by every cottager; seeing you almost every day,

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either passing or going in next door. You cannot guess what a trial it has been to my foolish child to know you every day within a few yards of us, and not to be able to speak to you."

"Oh, yes; I have been sorely beset by jealousy of Miss Dering," said Caterina, laughing. "I do not envy her anything but you; she may have her many gay friends, her lively society, and all the fine young cavaliers who haunt her garden. It would not suit our Italian manners to have the same; I should blush to think of entertaining so many gentlemen as walk up and down her garden with her; you English young ladies are so gay, so lively, so little *retenues* in your manners, it does look strange to us; but when I saw Miss Moore, and used to hear her voice so low and soft and sweet through the shrubs, I used to creep near, and wish with a palpitating heart, I were Miss Dering."

"I fancy the gay voices you heard must

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have been Emily's brothers and sisters. I don't think that they have a great many visitors."

There was something I did not like in the observation.

"I do not know," replied Caterina; "perhaps some of them were."

"Speak truth, Caterina," replied her mother, drawing herself up. "There are Mr. Suffield and Mr. Lawrence, and the one you call 'minister,' Miss Moore, Mr. Ormond, and now your own brother is often there. These, my child, are not her brothers,—speak truth with exactness."

"I did not mean to say what was not exactly true," was Caterina's answer, hanging her head, "but we need not count all Miss Dering's visitors, mamma, let us talk of something else. Do you love music, Miss Moore?"

We talked a little about music and other safe topics, then I rose to go.

"Shall I see you at Fairy Hill?" said I.

"No," replied the Signora, with her state-

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liest look. "We pay no visits here. If Miss Moore likes to seek us, she will be welcome always, but we cannot farther break through our rule."

"Welcome, always," echoed the daughter; "welcome as the sunshine! and you will come again, I know, oh I am sure you will, where your presence gives so much pleasure. Say you will come again, and come soon too;" and she looked imploringly.

Of course I said I would, and took leave; going home at once; and meditating much as I went. So I had made their acquaintance, had succeeded in my object, and had been pressed to continue it; the question now to be decided was whether it had been worth the struggle: did I like them after all? I could not make up my mind; they interested, surprised, excited me; they were not like what I had fancied or expected; were they really pleasant, had their conversation been agreeable; had it not left a sting behind, unintentional no doubt, but not the less real.

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What did they mean about Emily Dering; was she really in the habit of receiving so many visitors as to cause comments on her conduct! and was my own brother one! that must be Edward, for Stuart I knew was devoted to the Grange and its visitors. What did Edward intend by going there, anything or nothing? I must see. Charming as Emily Dering was, it would never do to have her seriously entangling Edward in an affection so very imprudent! she had no fortune, and Edward had too little industry or steadiness to make one in his profession; he was said to be studying for the bar, but I knew his study was almost entirely a pretence, he was really enjoying the sunshine of youth and prosperity like the grasshopper, and if not as extravagant as Stuart, which of course he had no right to be, he was at least as idle, and would eventually have to adopt the same means of support. He must marry an heiress; so to think of Emily Dering was foolish and unprincipled.

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Having made up my mind on this point, my thoughts went back to the Mentesi. It struck me as odd how completely they had ignored my family; with the exception of the allusion to my brother, they had not made the slightest reference to any one of them, no enquiries after my sister, no mention of my mother, not even an apology for not admitting her acquaintance. Had I really been an independent householder they could not have acted differently, or been more entirely satisfied to confine their recognition of the family to my single person.

I could not but wonder why this was, but was rather inclined to attribute it to their ignorance of our country, which gave rise to an exaggerated notion of the independence of young ladies, especially heiresses. Perhaps knowing that our customs in some respects differed from theirs, they might suppose a still greater opposition than really existed, and because our single women were not under such severe restrictions as theirs, they might

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imagine we enjoyed such licence as girls in the United States; since we were not mere machines and nonentities, they might fancy us unconstrained free-agents But I was not disposed to cavil at a conduct which gave me so much self-importance. My foolish vanity was flattered by the preference expressed, and the fact that the exception in my favor arose from the character they had heard of me, strongly impressed upon my mind that Italian ladies in general, and the Countess de Catana in particular, were remarkably good judges of women, and possessed of far more discrimination than my country women could pretend to.

Ah, I was the silly fly, fluttering round the web, which in the bright morning beams shone so fairly with gay prismatic colours that I could not choose but draw near to see and examine it.

When I reached home I found Mr. Suffield had not told Grace where I was going, although he had sat some time with her and my mother, after I left the house. *Je lui savais*

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bon grè pour cela. I had all the amusement of making her guess where I had been, and then of trying to satisfy her curiosity about the visit and the visited.

But I could not quite make up my mind to forgive St. John for my own blunders. The remembrance of our conversation was a pin's point, constantly irritating me, but which I could not reach or remove. The whole family from the Grange were to dine with us, it was the invitation Stuart had planned, we were to have Mr. Ormond and his cousin, and Emily Dering was to spend the interval with Grace, and appear with her after dinner. There was a brother of hers just come home, who was to dine with us, and make our numbers even. I should therefore have an opportunity of seeing him again that very evening, and judging from his tone and manner, whether I might venture to pass over the affront.

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CHAPTER VI.

"And all that fills the hearts of friends
When first they feel with secret pain
Their lives thenceforth have separate ends,
And never can be one again.

LONGFELLOW.

ST. JOHN SUFFIELD was early in our drawing-room; or rather the five ladies who were to fill the family coach, and for whose sake he came on foot, were behind the time, notwithstanding Lady Suffield's correct adherence to punctuality. Some of us had changed habits that afternoon apparently, for whilst the Grange party were wonderfully late, I was ready dressed and down stairs before the necessary time, a rare event with me under any circumstances.

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It was very perverse of me, I was there only to be cross and unpleasant. He came up with his accustomed good manners, and made some easy observation, but my reply was so short and abrupt as evidently to surprise and pain him. He drew back and looked hurt. Then I *had* power over his feelings; the discovery flattered me, for I did not clearly apprehend that rudeness always pains, unless the perpetrator is an object of more than indifference, of contempt, and dislike.

Mr. Ormond came in a few minutes after, accompanied by his cousin, and almost directly followed by my mother and father. I meant to have conversed with Captain Ormond, but my father engaged him in conversation, and the clergyman was talking to my mother St. John and I stood in rather awkward silence. Then came the rest of the party, and there was plenty to do; but when we went into dinner, I found myself unluckily close to Mr. Suffield again, between him and Frank Dering, who was a young, half-frigh-

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tened lad, good-looking enough, but without more manners than a school-boy. He did not even know how to admire me. To him I was very gracious, but it was heavy work, and nothing but my absolute determination to show indifference to St. John, and prove my disregard, could have given me spirit to go on. Luckily Captain Ormond was opposite, and apparently found more attraction across the table than in the very quiet Clara Suffield who was his allotted share of amusement. We got into conversation, and at our end it was general; a very convenient circumstance, I fancy, for Stuart, who was able to make his own quiet *tête-à-tête* with Marianne Elson very effective. They were getting on most prosperously. Stuart's manners indeed were sure to captivate where he tried, and Miss Marianne's age gave them all the importance which could be desired. She was falling in love with him more foolishly than any young girl of seventeen.

Dinner was over at last, and then came the

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evening. Bent on punishing Mr. Suffield, I established a system of barricade, and shut up both myself and Grace in a corner so effectually as to prevent his obtaining access to us. As to rudeness to the rest of the party, of course I did not care; my own will was all I followed.

My sister did not know he was in the room, and having introduced Frank Dering and the gallant captain, who immediately sidled up to me, I had the happiness to find that my plan was successful, the offender, although not without a reluctant look at our corner, retreated to my father, and with his mother fell into earnest discussion at the other end of the room.

Emily Dering, I guessed, was the magnet who drew Mr. Ormond into our circle, and presently somebody proposed a game of some sort; I quite forget what it was; something noisy and absurd, I believe. The young men made it so. Captain Ormond was a tall, red-haired, large young man, with a manner more

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easy than elegant; and yet not quite easy either; *empressé*, conscious, shy and trying not to be so; ludicrously desirous to please, and obviously admiring me. My brothers were with us, and Marianne Elson, affecting as I thought juvenility, more absurd than becoming; but that was Stuart's business.

I think we played several different games, and were as merry as possible; not that we girls were noisy; we left that to the gentlemen, but our party was too much so to allow of any thing like music amongst the others, which was the usual resource of the Suffields, and I really don't know how they amused themselves. They were left to my mother's care. Grace did not mean to be rude; her ignorance of all that she did not hear was sufficient excuse for her; for my part, it was only my usual style, and my brothers might have said the same; but I believe it was the first time that I had openly neglected the whole family of Suffields.

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When we were separating, my conscience smote me for my conduct to Lady Suffield, and remembering as I shook hands, that I had not spoken to her all the evening, I stopped her then to make amends, by keeping her, her whole party, and her horses waiting, whilst I whispered to her some particulars of my visit to the Mentesi, which I might have communicated as easily at any previous moment in the evening. Always wrong, whether negligent or attentive! my very efforts at courtesy failed, for they were only grounded on pure selfishness.

The last to leave the room was St. John; I was standing beside Grace again, when he advanced to say 'Good-night.' He spoke to her first. She quite started at his voice, and coloured a little as she said, "Mr. Suffield! I have not seen you all the evening. I had forgotten you were here! I hope you will forgive my neglect."

"There is nothing to forgive," was his

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somewhat pointed reply, "an unintentional oversight cannot pain like a determined slight."

"But you must have seen *me*," observed Grace, "why did you not come and join our party; were we too foolish foryou."

"I could not," he answered, "you were so surrounded, I could not approach you."

"I was not aware of it," said Grace. "But then I could not tell!"

"I believe I must say good night," said he, turning to me with an inquiring look, as if asking the reason of my conduct. I gave him the tips of my fingers, and turned away my head. I was cross with myself for being cross to him, but it only made me more ungracious.

I insisted the next morning on taking a long drive, to lunch with some friends ten miles off. It was, I protested, such a great while since we had been there; which was true enough; and we had been so often invited to go over and stay to luncheon, that my con-

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science suddenly became clamorous about neglecting them. At least so I said, and when I said a thing was to be done, it was rare indeed that it was not done accordingly. We drove off, and Grace, if she felt a little disappointment at missing the morning's reading, which was now not often omitted, except on bench days, soon with her usual cheerfulness threw herself into the pleasure of this expedition, and really enjoyed the excursion. We found a pleasant party, were beguiled into lingering the whole afternoon, and came home only just in time for our late dinner.

I asked if anybody had been there during our absence, and learnt that only Mr. Suffield had called at the usual time, and finding the ladies were out, had gone away again. That was what I intended. Stuart had a plan in his head for the next day, which precisely coincided with my temper. Marianne Elson wanted to go over to see a picturesque ruin, which was a point of attraction in our neighbourhood; I suppose he had made her want

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it! and it seemed that he had promised to drive her there, he having undertaken that we should accompany them.

There was a little discussion between us about the preliminaries of the plan; something was said about asking all the Suffields to join; but Stuart stood out stoutly against engaging in such a slow coach undertaking as including Lady Suffield and her state carriage. He would not hear of it. Miss Elson, too, did not want to go, he knew; he would not mind if we asked Suffield himself; he meant to drive Miss Marianne in his phaeton, he had promised it, and there would be seats enough in our barouche, if we chose to include St. John. But to this I objected rather positively, protesting that it would not look well to ask him and none of the ladies; rather a new thing for me to be studying decorum! but I had my motives; and so it ended in Stuart walking up to the Grange that evening, to carry our invitation to Miss Marianne, and no

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farther effort being made to fill the vacant seat in our carriage.

I could not repress a hope that in some way or other it would happen that Mr. Suffield would be of the party; I wanted Stuart to ask him from his own impulse, and flattered myself he would on coming back say, "I could not help including St. John, he is a nice fellow, and did so want to come."

But I was punished by having my own avowed way, and a second time I succeeded in keeping him at a distance when I would have given something considerable for his company. I hoped it vexed him. I know it sorely grieved me.

Just as we were starting, accident brought Captain Ormond to call. He had fallen in with my father, I believe, and was brought, nothing loth, to Fairy Hill.

My kind, gentle mother, seeing the young man cast wistful eyes at the carriage, and hearing his regret at missing us, invited him

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to join our party, to which I made no objection, and he gave a hurried and grateful assent. He tumbled into the carriage in an ungraceful manner, which sorely tried my sense of politeness, and looked so ecstatically happy as he seated himself *vis à vis* to me, that I had to begin talking vigorously to avoid a downright convulsion of laughter. I had no need to complain of want of admiration on his part, his whole face, eyes, mouth, and nose, seemed to be radiant with his sense of my beauty; and working to express it in any way but words.

He had some scruples about forsaking his cousin without notice, and we offered to go to the vicarage, and prevent Mr. Ormond suffering from anxiety lest he should have lost his way, or been tossed by a bull, or run away with by gipsies, I said; it was but a little out of the road, and would not detain us five minutes. But he said it was unnecessary, as he knew his cousin was not at home; he was perhaps at Mrs. Dering's, he was going there,

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and we might see him as we passed. At any rate it did not signify.

His reasoning appeared to me slightly inconsecutive; moreover, a conviction seized me that it was necessary to tell Emily Dering that we were going out, as she might be coming up through the heat to see us; so we must stop at Ivy cottage, and I sent Captain Ormond in with a message from me.

He did not stay many minutes, his cousin was not there, only Mr. Edward Moore was sitting in the drawing room, apparently engaged in learning from young Dering or his sister how to make flies. He had left the message; he hoped he had not kept us waiting, he had been as quick as possible

Edward again, thought I; I wish I had asked Emily to come with us. Well he would be going up to town soon, to his chambers, and that would put Miss Dering out of his head. But was Caterina right, and was Emily a flirt after all?

Our expedition was much what might have

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been expected. My amusement consisted principally in laughing at Captain Ormond's *gaucheries*; and making Grace laugh also when I could. He did not find it out, I suppose, or his admiration of me would probably have been lessened.

We were invited to dine at the Grange the next day, not a formal dinner party, but just such a friendly meeting as had been at Fairy Hill, and Lady Suffield had made it such an express petition that Grace should join our party after dinner (she never dined in company), that she could not refuse, had she wished it; which I don't think she did, except for form's sake.

I baffled St. John again the next day in an attempt at a renewal of his usual visits, and the reading to us; Grace did not know it, and thought perhaps as we were to meet in the evening he had not time to come.

What other people thought, or might think, of our way of going on, of course I neither knew nor cared, I despised public opinion

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professedly, and never if I could help it, asked that of my parents. I secretly believed St. John came for me, and cared for me, and I suppose my mother thought so too. She interfered neither by word nor look; my father did smile and wink a little now and then; but on the whole I arranged most domestic matters my own way, and whether Mr. Suffield or Captain Ormond came, or did not come, nobody said anything on the subject beyond a harmless jest.

As we were to be at the Grange all the evening, and Emily Dering was to be there too, I settled with Grace that I would go down and see the Mentesis again that afternoon, leaving her quietly at home with my mother, whose head needed rest.

I was but just outside our own gate when I met St. John. All my pulses fluttered, and I felt that my complexion varied rapidly. He was on foot, and immediately, instead of passing, turned, and placing himself at my side, seemed determined to walk with me.

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"It is two whole days since I have seen you or your sister," said he, "I have been very unfortunate."

"I am going down to Laurel Cottage now," was my reply, "do not let me take you out of your way, you were going on."

"No, I want to speak to you, Miss Moore, What is the matter! what have I done, or not done, to offend you, I am unconscious of having given offence, then why this change?"

There was such an honest, straightforward simplicity in his way of speaking, as quite baffled me. I was taken aback, as my brothers used to say, and did not find any words conveniently under command to reply. He waited patiently for a little while, looking at me however so steadily that I could not raise my eyes to his, but as I continued silent, he added—

"Surely it is not fair to send me to Coventry without so much as a hint of my offence. Do treat me like a rational creature, and explain your reasons."

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I felt very foolish I confess; I would gladly have denied that there had been any change, but it had been too palpable to deny it: I felt I might as well have tried to persuade him that the sun was not shining. At last the only sentence in which I could take refuge was to ask him of what he complained, to what he alluded? I could not answer a general charge.

"Are you quite sincere, Miss Moore?" he asked gravely, "but I will not keep you in ignorance. When I dined at Fairy Hill three days ago, you know that you not only refused to speak to me yourself, but entirely prevented your sister doing so either. I know she did not mean to be unkind, or to make any difference; can you say it was not your intention either?"

As I could not, I preferred saying nothing.

"I do not remember," he went on "anything in our conversation in the morning that need have made you angry. I am sure I meant nothing. To the best of my belief I

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used no expression implying censure. I gave no opinion which could be considered impertinent or intrusive; you cannot judge that silence or caution deserves punishment. You cannot be displeased with me for what I did not speak. If I knew my fault I would willingly apologise, but I am utterly at a loss now."

He paused every now and then as he spoke, to give me time to answer, but I said nothing. I was thinking, but my thoughts were too disorderly for words.

"Very likely," he continued "you do not know from experience how painful it is to meet with unexpected coldness, when you looked for friendly regard, you may happily never have undergone this; but do take it on my word that it is very unpleasant, and either tell me the reason for your conduct, or say that we are friends again as we were."

"I greatly prefer doing the latter," said I trying to smile, but still very uncomfortable.

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"Then it was only a caprice," said he, looking at me earnestly.

"You are tyrannical to make me own my weakness," I answered, evading his looks.

"Because if I think that, I shall not mind it at all," continued he. "It makes me unhappy to suppose I have done wrong; but if it is no fault of mine, another time I will take no notice."

"But you ought to mind my doing wrong, even if *you* are not to blame, Mr. Suffield," said I trying to laugh away my embarrassment, "have you no concern for that?"

"The wrong of being tired of my company! oh, I think I can excuse that. It is perhaps natural enough, although of course I should prefer being always agreeable."

I might not have got over my displeasure towards him, had Mr. Suffield appeared in the smallest degree conscious of my real feelings. It was evident that he had attached no importance to my words, had considered my implied deference to his opinion, and half-

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promise to be guided by it as a joke; had he understood how sincere I was at the moment, he must also have apprehended better how his refusal to assume such influence had affronted every proud womanly feeling. So far from seeking to restore our intercourse, I am convinced he would have shunned it decidedly, had the smallest suspicion crossed his mind that my preference for him was more than he wished to excite. But his perfect innocence and evident unconsciousness of my motives and feelings, restored my equanimity, by again putting me on good terms with myself. I began to think that I had attached far too much importance to my words and actions; had supposed my conduct more transparent than it really was, and had taken a great deal more blame to myself, and made myself a great deal more unhappy than there was the least occasion for.

If he did not think me vain and forward, I could bear his not appreciating the compliment I had paid him; perhaps time would

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give him quicker perceptions in that respect. At all events the modesty, which prevented his seeing it now was equally amiable and consoling to me.

I rather felt than thought all this, and came so rapidly to the conclusion that I need not mind the past, that we were not more than half way to Laurel Cottage before I had quite forgiven myself, and consequently him too.

"You paid your visit the other day to the Italians," said he presently. "I have never heard how you liked them, though I suppose you did, as you are going there again."

"Well, it is not easy to give an opinion," I replied rather hesitatingly. "I liked them, and I did not like them; they attracted, and yet they repelled me. Make sense of that, if you can!"

"I daresay I could," was his answer, "especially if I learnt a little more from you: but the attraction was stronger than the repulsion evidently, since you are going there again to-day."

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"Yes, I believe so; they begged me so earnestly to repeat my visits, and I do want to see more of them, just to make them out. They received me with the greatest pleasure and *empressement*!"

"Well, you know best your own wishes," said he, looking down a little gravely, "but, perhaps, you will allow me to warn you, that these ladies and their priest are very zealous in making converts."

"I like people who are zealous; it is entirely in their favor, I consider. It shows they are real and true."

"They may not be the safer acquaintances for that," said he doubtfully.

"I don't think they will convert me, Mr. Suffield. If ever they begin to try, I will let you know."

"I do not fancy that they are such bunglers as to begin by telling you their intentions, Miss Moore. Your fortune and the independent position which you will in a year or two

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occupy, make you, of course, an object of interest to all speculators; may be, these papists are amongst that class."

"I do not believe if they should try to convert me, that it would be with interested motives," said I, speaking rather warmly. "By your own admission, they are zealous to spread their own religion, and there are not many rich converts to be made amongst the villagers here!"

"That is true! yet I think your great wealth should make you careful regarding your associates and intimates. Riches are a snare and require heedful walking, lest they lead to misery."

"If my wealth is to make me suspicious and cold-hearted, it will indeed lead to misery!" exclaimed I.

"Suspicious of yourself it should make you. Careful of the motives which influence your choice of friends; watchful that you are not led by self-love, or charmed by the subtle

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voice of flattery. You know the proverb, 'He that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a snare for his feet.'"

"But to adopt your way of thinking, Mr. Suffield, would make life in itself a trial!"

"I always understood that it was so!"

"I shall hate my fortune if it brings me such a burden."

"The burden of trial must be ours, whether we are rich or poor, Miss Moore; and certainly, although different, the temptations and difficulties which beset riches must be greater, because more seductive, than those attending poverty. The power of self-indulgence makes one so inclined to use it. I daresay, as you say, it is safest to dread the wealth which is our trial, and look on it as a burden."

We were just come in sight of the Signora's house.

"Are you going to pay a long visit?" asked he. "Excuse my impertinence," he added, smiling at my look of surprise. "But I am going in to carry a message to Mrs. Dering

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from my mother, and if I thought I should have a chance of walking back with you I would wait."

I hesitated a little.

"You know I have not been inside Fairy Hill since I dined there," he went on, looking, I thought, a little embarrassed. "And you have got over your weariness of my society, have you not? your caprice is at an end for this time; we are friends again."

"I forbid you to say anything about my caprices, Mr. Suffield," I answered, affecting more liveliness than I felt, to hide some other feelings.

"I don't think I shall attend to your command, though," said he, archly. "If you treat me to caprices, I shall amuse myself with laughing at them. No, don't be angry; we are friends now!"

"Friends, oh yes! but don't wait for me, unless you like; I may be long, and if so, good morning!"

He took my hand, and shook it heartily: it

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was evidently a ratification of our treaty of peace.

I went in at the gate by which we had been standing; he entered the other.

I was met by Caterina, who apparently came flying downstairs to open the door.

"Ah, dearest Miss Moore:" she was going to embrace me, then drew back; but I would not allow her to change her style of salutation, and returned her embrace cordially.

She looked delighted as she murmured: "How good she is. Is this a proud Englishwoman? Ah, how the world slanders the good and the beautiful!"

She spoke in Italian, as if merely giving utterance to her thoughts to herself; then, passing her arm round my waist, led me into the same room which I had seen before. She took me up to her mother, and exclaimed, still in the sweet Italian language:

"Mamma, she is not what they say; how wicked the world is."

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Madame Mentesi smiled, and whilst she gracefully received me, said:

"My silly, impetuous child, how you talk; what have you got now in that foolish head of yours?"

"Why you know, mamma, what we heard; how they said of Miss Moore and her brother that they were the proudest and prettiest pair in the county." She spoke these words in English.

"Hush, hush, Caterina! what will Miss Moore think of you!"

"She will think no harm," said Caterina, laying her cheek beside mine, "will you? I say the world is wicked to say such things," said she, drawing up her head, and stamping her foot with Italian energy. "She is not proud, mother! she embraced me, me, the poor Caterina, as no proud girl would have done. Nor is she pretty! she is lovely, beautiful, heavenly."

I felt a little uncomfortable under these ob-

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servations; St. John's voice was ringing in my ear. To what did this flattery lead, from what did it spring? It relieved me when Madame Mentesi said smiling, "Do not talk so, Caterina, you distress our dear English friend; she will not understand the feeling of openness from which your observations spring. Italian candour must, I think, be like our beautiful wild flowers, so common in all our cornfields at home, but here valued as garden treasures. Excuse my poor ignorant girl, who, bred in the seclusion of a convent, knows nothing of the insincerities of the great world. She is transparent because she is ignorant of evil."

"Were you brought up in a convent," said I, interested in the idea, "may I ask you how you spent your life; whether you liked it?"

"Ah, if I liked it; if I enjoyed such a serene felicity? dear Miss Moore, you who pass your life in the bright sparkling pleasures of the gay world, can form no idea of the deep, pure, serene happiness attending the sunshiny calm

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of a convent. It is like the cold flowing waters from a dark still grotto in a rock, on a hot stifling day; compared to the bubbling stream from which you can hardly drink without imbibing grit and floating particles, and maybe more unwholesome matter. Ah the convent-roof shelters from such stormy passions; the convent-grate shuts out such bitter mortifications; the voice of the vespers or complines falls on the heart, like the cold hand of love on the burning brow, soothing, consoling, edifying, strengthening."

She clasped her hands, and turned her eyes upwards with enthusiasm, almost theatrical.

"But I want to hear how you passed your time," said I; "what employments and pleasures had you?"

"I was only a boarder," she answered, "and learnt my lessons, and took my recreations at stated hours. We had poor pensioners to work for, and as rewards, were allowed to dress the chapel when the Bishop came to say mass for us; or we had our little orphans to care for

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and instruct; and certain of the sacred offices to attend; but I could converse with the nuns and hear their opinions and watch their death-beds too, Miss Moore; and oh, when I come to die, may my last hours be like some of theirs."

The mother's beautiful eyes reddened with tears as the daughter spoke thus.

"I believe my child's vocation is to a holy life," said she, "and I could part with her to be the bride of Heaven; but she will not leave me alone, and I cannot oppose her pious resolution."

"Oh no, I could not leave you alone, sweet mother," exclaimed Caterina, jumping up and kissing her. "You know I could not for any wish of mine."

Madame Mentesi embraced her daughter, and then left the room. Caterina walked to the window, then came back and sitting down again, began speaking of her mother. Her ardent filial affection pleased me. At last she exclaimed:

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"I fear I worry you with my foolish enthusiasm, and no doubt it seems strange to you, who have such a different path before you. You are to be a *sposa* soon, are you not?"

"Not that I know of," said I, a little startled.

"Ah, you wait no doubt till you are mistress of your fortune; that will be two years, at least. I do not wonder *you* are in no hurry, for it must be an awful thing to be married, and to have to give up one's own family; but dear Miss Moore, I think were I the *sposo*, I should not like to wait."

"But there is no *sposo* in the case," I exclaimed a little surprised, "what do you mean? I am not engaged to be married."

"Not to Mr. Suffield—him whom I saw part with you at the gate!"

"No indeed, not to anybody."

"But then perhaps your parents have made the engagement without your knowledge," suggested Caterina.

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"No indeed, English parents don't do such things; and least of all mine, because I am so perfectly independent. What makes you fancy this?" I was secretly flattered by the idea.

"It was something I heard Mr. Suffield say one day; he was talking to Miss Dering and he said a great deal about you, his admiration, his love—*que sais-je*. Mamma says that is the way gentlemen talk. The beautiful Henrietta, the fascinating Miss Moore, then he added, when we are married we will do something. I forget what—finish building his house, I think, with your money. He did speak of the money. He said it was awkward to have to wait so long; but he must wait for he wanted more, I think because he was so rich already."

"But how did you hear all this? You do not know either Emily or Mr. Suffield to speak to."

"I was sitting on that bench under the

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laurel. I saw them, I heard them as plainly as I see or hear you."

I bit my lip, then could not resist saying: "I wonder you listened."

"What, when they talked of you, *mia bella*; could I help it? Every sentence in which your name was uttered was music to my ears. I rejoiced to find that you were destined to have so fine, so rich a husband; one who loved you so well. I never thought but that it was all settled. However, it will be so soon."

I rose to go; Caterina hung round and begged me to come again soon. I did not tell her that St. John was waiting for me. I took leave and quitted the house. I was half sorry, half glad that I had heard all this. I condemned myself for weakness in listening to Caterina, and yet I was inexpressibly delighted at the thought of St. John's affection. According to this he loved me, and something told me that I loved him. I believed I did.

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Had he asked to walk home with me for—the blood came up hot to my cheeks, and I did not finish the sentence to myself—I heard his footsteps behind; he overtook me before I had gone a hundred yards.

"Well," said he, as he joined me, "your visit, considering all things, was not so long as I expected; but I made sure you would have called next door. I was nearly missing you. That was not fair."

"I want to be home," I answered, "to walk with my sister; and we are to see Emily this evening, you know. But I deny that you have any ground of complaint; the plan was yours, and if you wanted to catch me, it was your business to try. I never promised to wait for you."

He assented very quietly, but betrayed none of the consciousness which my speech might well have excited, had he caught the double meaning of my words. After a few minutes' pause, I began:

"Mr. Suffield, what you said about riches

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being a burden and a trial haunts me. I want to understand more, for I fear I have thought too little on the subject."

"That is natural enough," he replied. "One could hardly indeed wish a young girl to dwell much on a matter so very seductive as her future fortune. Few could do it, and avoid the evils of proud self-gratulation, of self-importance, and trusting in riches! It is better perhaps that you should have thought too little of your responsibilities, than too much of your possessions. You have time enough before you to repair the omission. I think I understand you still want two years of the time when you become mistress of your property."

I agreed, edified at his knowledge, and not thinking it necessary to make it more exact. But I was twenty-one in the June preceding, and it was now October.

"Just the years," he continued, "most valuable in a woman's life. When you have attained such maturity as must make you

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appreciate improvement; and yet not arrived at the age when your habits are too fixed to be easily altered."

"And what age do you take that to be?" asked I laughing.

"I don't think women alter much after five and twenty," said he quietly. "What they make themselves before that, such they continue to be. I should rather say, the seeds they sow then, are what spring up and increase. For of course time does alter them for better or worse; every disposition developes itself more strongly as years go on."

"How came you to have studied women so accurately."

"Only by keeping my eyes open. I have a mother and sisters; I have had cousins; I have watched and reflected, that is all."

"One would think you were a patriarch, of a hundred years old," I exclaimed, laughing at the absurdity as it appeared to me, of this handsome young man, reasoning in this way about the peculiarities of girls; "but this is

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not what I wanted to ask you. I am more interested about this theory of yours regarding money. I want to know more. Do you think property such a snare that you would not have more if you could? Don't you wish for greater wealth yourself?"

"Do you want to test the realities of my theories, Miss Moore?"

"Answer my question, Mr. Suffield, candidly, if you please."

"You must know how hard it is to comprehend one's own feelings, and be sure of one's own motives; but I think I may say, that I do not *wish* to be richer."

"Ah! but if a fortune came in your way would you refuse it?"

"No, my conduct proved that I would not, for most of the property I possess was left to me by a cousin, quite unexpectedly, and I did not reject it."

"But are you sure you do not want more? not even to finish your house?"

"No," persisted he stoutly, "my house will

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be finished by the time I shall want to live in it. I have built it out of my income, so I shall be none the poorer in the end. I expect to complete it by next spring. What makes you catechise me so?" looking at me a little curiously.

"Only because I want to ascertain how far the possession of wealth contributes to happiness; for, you know, if I am to prepare my mind for mine, I must learn to appreciate it properly. So you are quite contented! wish for nothing more?"

"Keep to the point, Miss Moore, you are wandering now. I may wish for so many things which money cannot ensure, that my desires can be no rule regarding the advantages of wealth."

"Only it might give me some idea of the vacancies it leaves. Do you possess a good subject for grumbling now, or does your money deprive you of that."

"I rather hope my disposition does. The

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pleasures of grumbling and the opportunities must depend so entirely on that!"

"Well, if you don't enjoy a good growl every now and then, I have little hopes of our understandings ever attaining a platform of mutual sympathy. Indeed I am not sure that I could thoroughly trust any one who did not give utterance to his discontent in that way."

Mr. Suffield only smiled; a smile that seemed to me to imply that he did not mind my opinion. I should certainly have read it so, had not Caterina made her revelations. I went back to another branch of our discussion.

"If I understand you right then, Mr. Suffield, you think that after I am five and twenty I shall have no chance of improvement?"

"Unless you have set about it before, Miss Moore; you must not take one proposition and drop the other on which it depends. Besides I did not say *you*, I said women in general!"

"Yes, but it makes it easier to understand

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if one takes an example, instead of generalizing. Now, stop a moment, let me think; but that it would have been no use trying to begin earlier than twenty-one, as before that discreet age, we are not wise enough to know what improvement we need. Was not that your idea? Woman under twenty-one is merely the seedling with too little stamina and consistence to receive the grafts which are to perfect the worthless stock. You leave us a terribly short time for our mental and moral culture. Under that age we may laugh and dance and sing, indifferent to the future, because incapable of better employment. Am I right?"

"I will not answer you, Miss Moore."

"Come, I will not be naughty," said I, saucily, "and then don't you be cross. Does it not strike you that there may be as many varities of woman-kind as there are of apples, some of which ripen in July and some in January."

"Certainly."

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"Now, for instance, here am I the silliest, most trifling, idle, self-willed baby of twenty-one—there is Grace with fortitude and sweetness, thoughtfulness and self-devotion fit for a woman of forty, and yet all the liveliness of her own actual seventeen!"

St. John did not answer immediately, but presently he said, "Circumstances make a difference." Then he stopped abruptly; but added immediately, "*Sometimes* the fruit that is longest in ripening, is the most valuable in the end."

I do not think the implication, however flattering, quite satisfied me. I did not want St. John Suffield to think me idle, silly and trifling, whatever I might say of myself. I doubt whether anyone makes such confessions with the least idea of being taken literally. At least I did not. I was silent for the rest of our walk.

"I bring you," said I, as I conducted St. John into the drawing-room, "a penitent and we will hope a reformed individual, anxious

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to make his apologies and procure dispensation for the neglect of the last three days. In other words, Grace, here is Mr. Suffield, who is very sorry for having been kept away from us for so long a time."

He shook his head at me, as after having greeted my mother he turned to take the hand which my sister extended; but he looked particularly happy and well pleased.

After a little conversation on other things, I remember Grace began telling him of our excursions on the two last days and the beauty of the scenery round the ruined Abbey, with the view from it, as if she had seen it all. But that was always her way, she made her descriptions, by the help of memory and imagination, by listening and recollecting, often more vividly correct than I could with my best endeavours. She was certainly a wonderful creature; I am afraid I fail as much to do her justice by my words now, as I then did in my attempts at equalling her lively delineations.

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"And really," she added, "we enjoyed ourselves very much; you know how careful Henrietta always is for me, and Captain Ormond, although perhaps not quite so handy as Edward in helping me, was quite as indefatigable and good-natured."

"Captain Ormond was with you was he?" said Mr. Suffield rather quickly.

"Yes, mamma asked him," I answered, with an assumed careless manner, for his tone interested me, really more than I wished to show. "It was quite accidental; he came up as we were starting, there was a vacant place, and when mamma offered, he accepted it."

"I thought it kind, as he was a stranger," said my mother; "it was a new country to him; and the girls did not mind it. He seems a well-meaning young man!"

"Remarkably good-natured," said Grace "so very anxious to be useful and agreeable."

"Oh yes, he seems the essence of good nature," I repeated, "and most desirous to

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please. A trifle too desirous perhaps, if it were allowable to find fault with good intentions."

"I did not hear anything about your expedition until it was over," observed St. John, in a tone of voice, which to my ear implied that otherwise he should have sought the vacant seat, and that he found this caprice of mine harder to forgive than the other.

"Miss Marianne Elson went with Stuart," replied Grace a little surprised, "I thought you would have heard it talked about at the Grange."

"I learnt it whilst your brother was dining with us. I don't often hear what Marianne and Stuart converse about," added he in a laughing tone. Grace did not seem quite to understand.

"Do you know, Henrietta," said she after a pause, turning towards me, "Captain Ormond has been here this afternoon; and I have been singing to him. What next, do you think?"

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"How came that, Grace dear?" asked I, for she used to be very shy of singing to strangers in general.

"Well, it began accidentally, for I was practising when he came in and did not hear him. I stopped when I knew he was there; but in a little while we arrived at a conclusion of all our ideas; and after a dead pause, which was rather fearful, he asked me to go on singing. I had not moved from the piano, and it was the easiest thing to do. Better than solemn silence at least; and do you know now, I really don't think I should mind people: I quite forgot he was even in the room."

"But for that last sentence, Miss Grace," said Mr. Suffield "I should have presented a humble petition to you to indulge me. I have never heard you sing at all; but I don't think I want you to forget I am present."

"Another time," replied Grace a little fluttered again, "you are a frightful connoisseur, Mr. Suffield."

"Indeed you do me wrong. Now, Miss

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Moore, will you not speak a good word for my character; do say I am not a critic. We shall not believe in your sister's boasted courage if it fails at the first trial."

"I shall certainly support your request, do sing, Grace!"

"If you will accompany me," said she, "or rather sing with me!"

"Yes, that is right," said St. John eagerly, as he re-opened the piano. "Sing together, and let me choose your song!"

But we did not allow this, as Grace would not sing anything of which she was not quite sure. I have seldom heard a tone like hers; such a clear, thrilling, bird-like sound, as if it were the real voice of her heart and feelings, a spontaneous melody without effort or constraint.

I could see that Mr. Suffield was touched by it; he turned away, and leant his head on his hand, but he listened with all his soul.

I remember we sang several songs, one after the other; sweet duets from Mozart and

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Auber and exquisite old bits from Handel or Glück; Grace never would learn second-rate music, and though she could not help catching the tunes of such popular melodies as 'Cherry ripe' or 'I'd be a butterfly' with which common-place performers amongst our young lady acquaintance delighted common-place audiences, she never could admit them to be music. Now she was forgetting everything as she breathed out '*Ah perdona*' or '*Lascia ch'io piangha*;' for once having begun, she no longer needed the support of my voice, but followed me as I went on from piece to piece, almost without thinking.

At length we paused.

"Are you not tired?" said St. John, approaching us when we ceased.

"Oh no, it does not tire me, singing is no effort," said Grace, "but now, Mr. Suffield, will you make me a promise; don't ask me to sing before people, strangers I mean! I don't like it."

"I would not do anything you dislike,"

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said he, "only you will reward my forbearance perhaps, by sometimes letting me hear that music again, for I do like it. Will she not, Miss Moore?"

"I think she will," said I, smiling at the appeal; and Grace did not object.

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CHAPTER VII.

> And what are the studies you pursue
> What is the course you here go through?
>
> The first three years of the College course
> Are given to logic alone, as the source
> Of all that is noble, and wise, and true.
>
> GOLDEN LEGEND.

I SUPPOSE I need hardly specify that after this, our dinner at the Grange was very pleasant, nor need I hint that it was arranged with much more regard to the general feelings and the comfort of all the guests, than our own party at home. Nothing in Lady Suffield's house would be negligently performed, and all her cares would be unselfish and benevolent.

Clara Suffield did not dine with us, to de-

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vote herself to Grace, who was much fonder of her than I was; and Emily Dering, as well as her brother, were of the party at table. I might not have noticed this particularly, had not my fears been aroused regarding Edward; and although sitting by my own choice at the bottom of the table, and having Captain Ormond on the other side, I was naturally a good deal engrossed by conversation, I yet could see that Edward was really as much devoted to Emily, as Stuart himself to Marianne Elson, and knowing them well as I did, I fancied there was more of sincerity in his devotion.

I hoped that the fancy of a boy of twenty would not however be very serious, and that the departure to London would give an entirely new turn to his ideas. The first love of a boy is not such a very fatal affair after all, and he would soon outgrow it; as to Emily, I should be sorry were she to suffer; very sorry; but separation would certainly be the

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least evil of the two. The imprudence of an engagement at their age, and with their prospects struck me so forcibly.

My own impression was, that my anxiety for their real happiness, especially that of my brother, was very praiseworthy and unselfish, and that in preferring his future good to his present enjoyment, I was acting in a high-principled way, quite exemplary: it did not strike me that nothing is easier than to suggest sacrifices to prudence, in which one has no share except that of spectator; nor did it enter my head that the very great superiority of my fortunes might have supplied me with the power of securing my brother's happiness, had it really depended on Emily Dering. The horror which I had expressed at the idea of the burden of riches to myself, gave me no real wish to get rid of them, by parting with my future possessions. A quarter of the sum accumulated during my long minority would have formed a handsome portion for Edward's

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wife by and bye; and it would not have been missed by me! but the idea did not suggest itself.

I can see all this now quite plainly, and wonder at my own selfish hardness. Perhaps had Edward been allowed to make Emily his object, to look forward to her hand as the reward of an industrious application to his profession, the stimulus would have been sufficient to produce those habits of steadiness which his character needed. Emily, amiable, high-principled, and self-denying herself, would have been precisely the woman to urge him to exertion from similar motives; and how happy they might have been together.

Whatever it may be for a woman, I believe that for a young man an engagement in early life is in many cases a singular benefit, a happy engagement! It may be (I have heard people say it is) that even a sincere affection produces good effects; strengthens, steadies, purifies the mind; but I think this must be

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with strong, manly characters, able to grapple with difficulties, to lay a firm, unflinching hand on the rough, or the thorny duties of life. And even then the disappointment to do good, must take its rise from some less odious source than the cold unfeeling interference of worldly-minded advisers. Few tempers could be the better for that trial; and where the temper is soft, indolent, careless, or indifferent to high motives, this sort of thwarting may well sour a man for life, or at least bring on a tendency to egotism and cynical exclusiveness.

Moralising again! I have done. I go back to my story.

In my own room that night I reviewed the whole day, and two or three circumstances struck me, on which my mind had not dwelt before.

St. John's conversation with me regarding money, did not at all accord with the wishes which Caterina had attributed to him; he denied in such express terms, and with such

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a look of innocent sincerity any wish for an increase of fortune, that I could only conclude that she had partially heard, and entirely misunderstood, the conversation she alluded to. I was glad of this.

Another thing passed through my mind also, but was dismissed as unpleasant. Had not Caterina assured me that he was so much attached to me, I should have doubted from his manner, whether *love* were really what he felt. It did not seem quite like it, so far as I knew: he had so much self-possession, such a very quiet, unconstrained way of talking! but as I said, the idea was unpleasant, and I was not at all in the habit of troubling myself with unpleasant ideas. My vanity and my wishes found a ready consolation in the conclusion that men differed so very much in their ways of testifying affection, and that if he was sufficiently open to confess his attachment and talk of his views to Emily, he might well be self-possessed enough to converse with me as he did. There

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could be no motive for her to mislead me, nothing which could give rise to a shadow of suspicion!

From my own affairs, I turned to consider Edward's proceedings: and after a good deal of cogitation I determined on a mode of action in that respect.

I was quite aware that to attempt to control my brother's conduct would be useless; and I had reason to think from what I made Frank Dering tell me, that he spent a good many hours in the week at Ivy Cottage. The resolution I took was to bring Emily more to Fairy Hill; the hours that St. John spent with us, I discovered were exactly those when Edward was at the cottage; as I did not approve of this arrangement, I altered it, and before the end of another week it had been changed for the very reverse. Emily came to us regularly and assisted, as the French say, at our reading parties. I brought about this point by a little skilful use of persuasion and affection; by making Grace ask it herself, and by

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convincing Mrs. Dering that such intellectual advantages were of the first importance to her daughter.

October had been remarkably fine, and November set in dryer and brighter than usual; there were very few days in which the weather interfered with our engagement, for Emily was quite rural in her hardy contempt of rain and wind; and what did not deter her, was not likely to stop a man like Mr. Suffield.

During the afternoons at this period, the families at the Grange, the Cottage, and Fairy Hill, together with the gentlemen from the Vicarage, were constantly meeting, and undertaking together either walks, drives, or matches of archery. Captain Ormond's admiration of me continued to increase, although demonstrations were like a flickering candle, sometimes flaring up into unusual and somewhat uncouth conspicuousness, sometimes sinking down to the last stage of exhausted vitality.

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At first he was merely a subject of amusement, and I think his affection would have died a rapid but most natural death, had he in the least suspected the ridicule with which I treated him. I wonder if any man can bear being laughed at with perfect equanimity; I am not sure that I ever saw any who could. It is the very suspicion of ridicule, the dread of raising a smile, that makes mankind so stiff, unnatural, and absurd.

There was great temptation certainly to amuse myself at Captain Ormond's expense, and Stuart was for ever mimicking his *gauche* gallantries, his shy efforts at boldness, and his frightened exhibitions of admiration; so that *á l' Ormond* became a sort of standard word with us, a regular comparison when anyone was impetuously awkward, or rashly ambitious of being agreeable.

Stuart once dressed himself as a gipsy-woman, and stopped us in the park to tell us our fortunes; and he really did it so well that he mystified everybody; I only found it out

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by his shewing me the cotton gown which he had borrowed from one of the maids, which he wanted me to mend before he returned it, as he had torn the body. When I recalled the figure of the woman who had so astonished us, her blue skirt, red cloak, yellow kerchief, and black curls, I could hardly then believe that he had really been the person; but remembering the flattering hints he had thrown out to the gallant Captain, the report of great promotion awaiting him, and the good luck read in his face, with the comic incredulity professed by the victim, I went into fits of laughter, and could scarcely look at my admirer with gravity all that evening. He certainly was ill-used, yet I must say he did a great deal to provoke the ridicule he met with. Thick and heavy as he was, it was ludicrous to attempt to emulate the graceful agility of my two brothers, who, perfectly well made and accustomed to gymnastic exercises, could perform feats in leaping, climbing, and such active sports, as the stiff soldier

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endeavoured vainly to imitate; if he would have been content to be as nature had intended him, a quiet, slow, good humoured unambitious spectator of their superiority, he would have escaped a great deal better.

But when he upset the canoe on the canal, because he would try to paddle it, and issued thence dripping like a water-god, and disconsolately walked home to the Vicarage instead of staying to dine with us, or when he caught his foot in trying to leap a fence over which Edward had vaulted so lightly, and was brought prostrate on his face to the ground, what mortal could help laughing at his plight?

Some of his misfortunes were really beyond a laugh however.

One evening he was at Fairy Hill, and we had been singing, Grace, St. John, and I, whilst he stood behind me pretending to beat time, and expressing admiration. The song was finished and Mr. Suffield had turned away, I think to answer some observation of

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my mother's, when Captain Ormond stooping to whisper something very impressive in my ear, unluckily supported his stout elbow on the music-desk, on which was already a perilously heavy book. I must admit that the desk itself was an awkward affair; they had not learnt in those days to arrange these matters with the compact simplicity of modern times. Still beyond a doubt his elbow was placed where no reasonable elbow would have been when, with a crash, down came book and desk together, without any warning, on my unlucky knuckles, for my fingers were still resting on the keys. He made a desperate but perfectly useless endeavour to save me from the damage threatened, and the result was the overthrow of the candlestick also. At the noise St. John turned round, happily just in time to save Grace, who altogether unable to protect herself, was not aware of her danger, until it was passed. Quick as lightning his eye perceived that the candle had fallen against her muslin dress, and that the

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first small flame was creeping upwards, and rapidly expanding; in another minute perhaps it would have been beyond control. I can hardly tell how he extinguished it; partly by his hands and arms, partly I believe by a large soft cushion with which he smothered the flames. I only know that when I looked round, he was on his knees before Grace, with a countenance whose expression I could not forget, whilst she was asking with the most astonished and yet innocent air, "what was the matter, what were we all about?"

Horror at the danger she had run, and gratitude for the presence of mind which had saved her, at first seemed to chain our faculties; then extricating myself from my own dilemma, I sprang to my sister, and stooping beside St. John, asked in tremulous tones if it was out.

"It is all right," said he, aloud; then in an under tone, "Thank God she is safe."

"Yes, indeed, and by you!" laying my trembling hand on his, as he slowly withdrew

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the cushion in which he had gathered the burning folds of her dress. I believe he wished her not to be frightened, and would have concealed it all from her had he been able; but she had heard his murmured ejaculation, and repeated her enquiry.

"The candle fell on your dress," said he, gently, "and I was afraid it would burn you; but there is no danger now."

At this moment, my mother, who had been slow in understanding it, came up. Grace's trembling hands were busy feeling for the mischief; her helplessness I daresay increased her sense of fear, and the shock to her nerves, as she discovered how great had been her escape, was almost too much for her. She became pale, and looked quite faint, tried to rally herself, and then finding her mother's arm round her, said, with a tremulous voice:

"Mamma, I have been nearly burnt, and Mr. Suffield saved me; thank him for me, and let me go away."

She ended her whisper in tears, and my

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mother quietly led her out of the room, signing to the others to keep back, and say nothing.

I began to be conscious that my right hand had been much hurt, and on looking at it, it appeared all livid and swollen across the knuckles from the blow I had received; hitherto excitement and fear had prevented my feeling the pain, but it now became severe. I sat down and asked Edward for the eau-de-cologne, which was on a table near him. I fancy they thought I was going to faint, and they got into a commotion, until I held up my hand, and showed my poor, injured fingers. At the moment all thoughts of the original culprit had gone out of my head; I was engrossed with the effects, not the cause, of the accident; but now, whilst St. John held the bottle, and Edward bathed my hand for me, my father insisted on knowing what was the origin of all this fracâs. It was a cruel question for poor Captain Ormond.

At first nobody knew, except the trans-

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gressor and myself; but finding my father repeated his question, and required an answer, I at last replied laughingly—

"The fact was, papa, Captain Ormond thought I was not attending, and wished to recall me to a sense of my duty. I only hope another time, when you rap my knuckles, Captain Ormond, it will not be quite so hard."

I looked at the unfortunate man, standing on one side, a most comic representation of shame and embarrassment, and I could not help laughing; although I believe I was sorry for him too. St. John said he thought he must go home; in wishing him good night I gave him the left hand, he did the same, which caught my eye, and I immediately exclaimed as I saw the position of the other. "Oh, Mr. Suffield, you are hurt too; you have burnt your hand!"

"Nothing to signify," was his answer, but I would take his hand and look at it. It was a good deal blistered all across the palm and

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inside of the fingers. I was greatly concerned, and wanted him to have it dressed at once. But he would not: he preferred going home. "My mother will do it best," said he, "I would rather go to her. It is really a trifle."

"At least let me wrap it in this handkerchief," said I, taking up one from the chair beside me. He resisted for a moment, then yielded quietly, and allowed me to envelope his wounds in the soft white cambric.

"I hope you do not expect to have this back again," said he, "I have a weakness for such delicate, refined, elegant things as this white muslin. My honesty will not be proof against the temptation, I am afraid."

"I will trust you," said I looking up quickly, and then dropping my eyes again, as I met his; for there was an expression in them I did not quite understand. But I resolved not to ask for the handkerchief again, and see the result.

St. John went away, and I turned to

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Captain Ormond, expecting him to go too. He came up to my side, and said, with a face of real concern. "I am so sorry, Miss Moore, so ashamed!"

"I don't wonder at it," said I, laughing, "I really think you never made more havoc on a field of battle. The piano probably out of tune, one candle-stick broken, one gown burnt, one lady driven off the field, and your worst enemy so seriously wounded as to be *hors de combat* for a long while. Next time your feelings are so wrought upon by our music, ask us to stop quietly, and don't throw the book at me, or the candle at Grace."

"Miss Moore, you are too bad!"

"Nay," said I drawing back with a face of pretended alarm, "don't get excited again, pray. Spare my nerves any farther damage, really I can stand no more to-night."

"Miss Moore!"

"We quite allow your triumph; you are, we admit, master of the field; standing unin-

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jured and unscathed amid the wounds and devastation you have wrought around. You are like—what shall we say—Marius amongst the ruins of Carthage! I think that is about it."

"Will you not forgive me?"

"Oh, if papa can forgive the injury to the candle-stick, mamma to the carpet, and Grace to her gown, I daresay I can muster charity enough to pardon the pain of my knuckles, at least when they are well again—but I will not play to you till then—"

"And Mr. Suffield! was he much hurt?"

"I have nothing to say to that, Captain Ormond; he must settle with you, it's his own affair: did you not see in his manner of saying good night that he meant to call you to account in another way, as soon as his hand was well?"

"Perhaps he may thank me for giving him the opportunity of showing his skill and adroitness; a man would not mind a trifling

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burn or two to prove his—affection!" The last word was spoken as he turned away his head in an under tone.

"Barbarian!" exclaimed I, with affected horror, "do you really mean to call those wounds trifling, and to pretend that in giving them, you have done Mr. Suffield a service? This hard-hearted indifference to pain must spring from being a soldier, used to battle and bloodshed."

"I assure you I am very sorry," said he, earnestly and gravely; "why will you not believe me. I would willingly bear twice the pain Mr. Suffield endures to escape the regret for my awkwardness, and double that to save you from the sufferings I have caused you."

The simple, down-right way in which he spoke, evidently straight from his heart, touched my better feelings. I saw he was really more to be pitied than any of us, and I was sorry for him.

"Come, come Captain Ormond," said I,

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"don't fancy me implacable or relentless. I was only laughing. Accidents will happen to the wisest and best of us, and we must excuse them. I grant you full and entire forgiveness for the past, in consideration of your penitence, and will remember your regret with approbation, so long as my fingers continue to pain me."

"Are they not getting better?" said, he approaching closer, and venturing to take my hand, or rather to attempt to do so.

"Oh yes, the soothing influence of your sympathy is balm to my pain: only they are not fit to be looked at just now." I drew back my hand as I spoke.

"Well, I must be satisfied if you forgive me, though you will not give me your hand on it."

"Nay, if you will promise to be very gentle and tender, I think just for five seconds, I might trust you with the tips of my fingers," which accordingly I slowly extended to him.

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His face flushed with gratification as he put them to his lips, in the most awkward way imaginable, but to my great relief he hurriedly said 'good night,' after that, and went away: I could not have maintained a face of tolerably civil composure a minute longer.

"Henrietta, do you propose to marry Captain Ormond," said my father, with unusual gravity.

"Dear me, papa, what an improper idea, what could make you imagine I should propose marriage to any gentleman, least of all the amiable captain?"

"Because if you don't mean to accept him, I really wish you would treat him a little differently. At present, it appears to me you decidedly encourage him."

An imputation which I strenuously and totally denied; my father said no more and the matter dropt.

Perhaps it was not wonderful that the Captain should present himself as early as he dared the next morning to inquire after the injuries

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we had received. St. John came too, but kept his word so far, he did not bring back the handkerchief; and I said nothing about it. Grace found words to thank him now for what he had done for her, whilst he half-playfully, half-gravely parried her thanks, and said he had done no more than any one who had seen her situation would have done as well. He scolded me for telling her he had burnt his hand, and would not allow he required any pity more than any gratitude.

The affair was not treated so coolly everywhere. I went down to the Mentesi that afternoon, and told them the story. Caterina went into raptures with the brave and thoughtful Mr. Suffield, and whilst extolling his heroism, was continually exclaiming, if he did so much for the sister what would he not do for the object of his real devotion. If he burnt his fingers for Grace, would he not lay down his life for Henrietta. I very sincerely hoped that he would not be called on to make such a sacrifice, but I thought it most be-

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coming and suitable to intimate a slight doubt as to the fact of his attachment to me at all; partly because I liked to have it asserted, and partly because I had a lurking unacknowledged diffidence on the subject, which now and then did cross my mind.

But Caterina was profuse in her assertions that such assiduous attentions as he paid could spring from nothing but love. Besides, she had heard his own declarations.

"When I hear his declaration I may believe him," said I, "but my dear Caterina how do you know he pays such assiduous attentions?"

"I see, and I hear," was her reply, "I think and I feel. Is there a day that you do not meet; do you not spend hours together; and could any one be in your company, bellissima, and help devoting heart and soul to you? You have no rival—for your poor sister is, I believe—besides being too young, blind and unportioned, is she not?"

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"Grace, oh yes! poor dear Grace, yes, she is very young."

"And nothing like your beauty, oh I know! no doubt, no doubt he loves you; but perhaps—"

"What!"

"Perhaps he feels *sure*, and is in no hurry to speak."

"Sure," repeated I proudly, and flushing crimson, "he had better not feel that; he has no reason."

"No reason! ah Miss Moore, do not those bright eyes tell a different tale," said Caterina laughing.

"Upon my word, Caterina," said I, much discomposed "you must not talk so. I would not have it supposed that I cared for Mr. Suffield, until he proposes to me, for anything on earth. Suppose it were only a mistake after all, and he had never thought of it."

"I cannot suppose anything of the sort," exclaimed she eagerly. "Dear Miss Moore,

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whatever your modesty may suggest you must indeed believe me. No doubt he loves you, only you see you are not of age yet, it is no use being in a hurry, and there is no rival, no one to make him afraid, you have no other admirer—not like Miss Dering, who, perhaps, cannot count hers on her fingers."

"I don't know anything about Emily Dering's admirers," I said pettishly, "but I do not see why you should suppose Mr. Suffield is the only one *I* have!"

"I should not have thought so certainly, looking at you, mia bella," said Caterina, taking my hand and peeping archly in my face, "but looking at his coolness, and the easy way he takes the affair, I guess he has no cause at all to disturb himself: even a shadow of a rival would quicken his motions, and make him humbly intreat your promise for the future."

"I almost doubt," said I thoughtfully.

"If a man really loved you," said she in a

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deep, earnest voice, "do you not think that he would hasten to make you his, even if he should forfeit all your fortune instead of half."

"Perhaps," said I; "but I don't know that I would let him."

"Not?—not to secure two years earlier happiness, when life is so short and uncertain!"

"Oh, but I am young enough to look forward many years, Caterina; and independence really is so sweet, I am in no hurry."

"I knew a young girl, a country woman of mine, Miss Moore, who said the same; she put off her betrothal a little longer, a little longer; and she was laid in her grave the day she was to have been wedded; ah, it was very sad!"

"Very likely, my dear Caterina, but would she have died the less, had she married earlier; no, no, that is nothing to the point at all."

"True, but she regretted then, that she had

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left *him* so unhappy—but for her wilfulness she might have given some days of felicity to him. She had to leave him alone."

"Whereupon he married again, I make no doubt."

"No, he took the vows in la Trappe!"

"But all this is nothing to the purpose," I exclaimed after a pause; "it is no question whether I will marry now, or wait; I must wait for the bridegroom you know."

"I would not. I would force him to declare himself; I would do anything rather than wait his pleasure."

I was annoyed again. I did not like to be supposed to care so much, and therefore quietly observed, it was no good talking of it. I then turned the conversation to Italy, and she talked a good deal about her brother the priest, the pleasure and comfort that he was; and then she went on to discuss the advantages people of her faith—of her religion she called it—had over others; because as their Priests never married, one could talk to them as

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fathers without fear of being misunderstood; no embarrassments, no disguises were necessary; women, even young women could put themselves under proper spiritual direction, and be told what to do, how to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and visit the sick, without at all risking being imposed on, for the priest knew all, and pointed out proper objects.

All this did not interest me much, until she brought it nearer home by saying, "Now see the difference here, Miss Dering goes about, helps the idle, gives money to the profligate, encourages the boldest and the worst, when she works by herself in the parish, or if she asks the vicar, he falls in love with her, and instead of thinking of spiritual things and seeking Heavenly blessings, all the people can see he is only seeking her love! earthly, almost profane!"

"It may seem to you extraordinary, Caterina, I daresay," said I quickly, "but you must remember it is not so to her or to

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him, or indeed to any of us. For my part I heartily wish Emily would marry Mr. Ormond."

"But you know she will not," replied Caterina, shaking her head.

"No, I do not."

"Oh yes, you know she will marry your own brother!"

"Edward! oh no: you quite mistake. Edward is a mere boy, and his passing admiration for her will die a natural death, when they are separated."

Caterina still shook her head provokingly, and smiled. I did not choose to argue the point, but although I was silent, she went on, until bit by bit, it came out that in spite of all my care and precautions, Edward was quite as much there, or in her company, as he had been; indeed her many walks to and from Fairy Hill had only furnished him with opportunities of escorting her, and perhaps they all thought that in encouraging her visits, and courting her society, I was really endeavour-

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ing to show my pleasure in the prospects of a nearer connection.

I left Laurel Cottage very dissatisfied. It was odd, certainly, but I never was in the company of that Italian girl, but I felt in leaving her a certain discontent at what had passed. Her conversation was sprightly and agreeable at the time, and it could not be her fault that it raised such ill-feelings in my mind. She could not judge of the effects her words had on me. And why had I not courage and self-control enough to turn away from personal topics, to avoid listening to her hints regarding Emily, or her more broadly expressed convictions respecting Mr. Suffield.

Alas, it was but a repetition of an old story. I was tampering with such conscience as I still had; she offered me the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, and as I could not resist the temptation, I tried to disbelieve that evil could ensue from yielding to it.

As to Edward's affairs, something I felt

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must be done; my busy, domineering spirit, my resolution to rule, and my passion for power, made me determine to have things my own way.

I have tried in relating my story to record the feelings which then governed me, not those with which I review my conduct. The remorse with which I am now burdened ought not to mingle in the gayer scenes of my life, or to give its shade to the actions I so fearlessly resolved on. I felt none of it then, and cannot give a true picture of myself at that period, without excluding it entirely from the scene.

Something must be done to save Edward, so I determined to speak to my father.

I rather suspect my father was not very fond of my speaking to him; perhaps he might have some reason to dread the arbitrary government I exercised, and to fear some unpleasant proposition which he might be compelled to carry out against his will.

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"Papa, when does Edward go to London?"

"Not till the spring, I believe, my dear."

"The spring! how does that happen? I thought he was to go this month."

"He says after Easter will be time enough. I dare say it will. He means to read here I believe."

"I dare say.—By the bye, papa, I have been often going to ask you; how do you like Emily Dering?"

"Emily Dering! Well, I don't know—I never thought whether I liked her or not."

"You had better make up your mind then, for you are extremely likely to have her as a daughter-in-law?"

"Hey—what do you say? why Stuart is not thinking of her!" said my father, startled.

"Not Stuart, but Edward. Don't you see how he is always following her."

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"Edward—bah—he's a boy, does not know his own mind! pray don't put nonsense in his head."

"If Emily is what you mean by nonsense, that's past praying for. She is there already."

"Then it is your doing, Henrietta. You brought them together."

"Not my doing intentionally; I brought them together perhaps, but with no such design. I liked Emily, and Grace liked her, and we asked her here."

"Just that; and the end is your brother falls in love with her!"

"Very true; but still I am not to blame for his weakness: unless you mean that I and Grace should have no female friends, lest my brothers should fall in love with them."

My father did not answer, but moved about and stirred the fire in a rather uncomfortable way. I thought I had said enough for one time, and let the matter drop.

The Elsons were to leave the Grange the

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next day. They had paid a long visit, and now they were going for the winter to Hastings. As yet Stuart had not informed us openly of his intentions; but I suspected that he and Miss Marrianne had come to a mutual understanding, and I was not therefore surprised when he announced that he should leave home in a day or two. Of course he was to follow them.

The next day, as I was spending a few minutes with the Mentesi, Caterina told me she had seen my father calling at the next house; she supposed it was to sanction Emily's engagement to my brother. I made no answer, but burning with curiosity, I soon left them, not however before she had whispered to me at parting, "Has Mr. Suffield returned your handkerchief?" He had not.

I resolved to go next door, and see Mrs. Dering; it was some days since I had been there. I found her in the drawing-room, and I fancy rather took her by surprise, for she had not time to wipe away some tears which

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were trickling down her face, before I entered the room.

I hesitated what to do, having more curiosity than sympathy about the source of her grief, for which I am afraid I should have cared little, had I not believed it connected with my father's visit.

"Is any thing the matter," said I at length; "I am afraid I find you in trouble?"

She sighed and turned away her head, then said it was nothing particular; nothing at least that she could try my patience by repeating.

"Has Edward been here to-day?" asked I, quite innocently in appearance.

She flushed a little all over her face, but answered he had not. There was a striking gravity in her voice.

"I dare say he will be here by-and-bye," I observed, in the same careless way.

"I do not wish that he should," she answered, with almost a haughty tone. "Should

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you see him, Miss Moore, and should you have reason to suppose he intends a visit, will you be so kind as to say that Frank is out, and that I am particularly engaged, so that we could not admit him if he came."

"I will certainly tell him so if you wish it. Is not Emily coming up to Fairy Hill to-day?"

"I rather think not, she has had an invitation from some cousins to go and visit them; and she has only just determined to accept it. So she is rather busy."

"Ah! indeed; that is rather sudden, is it not? She had no idea of going when I saw her yesterday?"

"No definite idea certainly: but the visit has been in contemplation sometime."

"It will make a great difference in our social circle; the Elsons gone, and Emily, and Stuart, also, perhaps too Edward may go to London, he has been thinking and talking of doing so."

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"I thought your youngest brother did not go till the spring," said Mrs. Dering, apparently surprised.

"Ah, ha!" thought I to myself, "Emily's going has something to do with us." "It is quite uncertain!" I said aloud. She made no more remark, so I went on: "Is Emily going to London too?"

"No." That was all the information vouchsafed me on that subject.

Finding her so very uncommunicative, I took leave, knowing that I had the resource of applying to my father for the information I wanted, and rather wishing that Mrs. Dering should suppose me well-informed on the matter.

This had been a bench-day, so we had not seen St. John that morning; but as I was walking home, I was overtaken first by Captain Ormond and then by Mr. Suffield. Caterina's words about rivalry came into my head, and I felt tempted to try the truth of

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her theories, and the strength of St. John's love.

But I had an instinctive feeling that this would be extremely difficult to do. It was not safe, I feared, to trifle with either gentleman; to encourage Captain Ormond by appearing to like him, brimful as he was of admiration, would in all probability cause his feelings to run over into a declaration of love, which would defeat my views, compelling me to terminate his attentions by a flat refusal. On the other hand, I knew it would be no use to affect coldness or indifference towards St. John, without any real reason; he would consider it merely a caprice, and either quietly wait till the fit was passed, or laugh it away, as he had threatened to do.

It was certainly a delicate matter to keep these two strings at precisely the right tension, and I am rather of opinion that in such a case the old proverb signally fails of correct application.

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I was so much occupied with these thoughts that I was uncommonly silent as we walked, and Captain Ormond exerting all his powers of eloquence to be entertaining, delighted himself by telling us a variety of stories, to which I perhaps appeared to listen attentively, whilst in fact I heard nothing.

I had never before paid him the compliment of such seeming attention, and I suddenly woke up to the conviction that I was flattering him in no common degree, by observing his radiant smiles, and the air of gratification pervading his whole person. His very coat collar seemed to stand out with pleasure. I glanced at St. John, he was looking grave and thoughtful; I was in my turn flattered and fluttered. We reached the gate of the flower-garden to which I had directed my steps, when the Captain suddenly remembered that he had an engagement, which compelled him to take leave. I pretended to be sorry, and after he had walked away, I stood and looked after him as if I

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cared, feeling it safe from elating him too much, and hoping to impress Mr. Suffield. But Captain Ormond unluckily looked back before he was too far off to see me, and when I hurriedly turned to pass through the gate which my companion still held open, I found he was quietly contemplating the house; may be counting the windows, he was gazing so steadily.

"It is a pity he has not more manner," said I, a little hurriedly, "he would not be a bad sort of man if he did but know how to behave."

"I think him a very good sort of man, as he is," replied St. John pleasantly.

"Wants refinement, and delicacy of taste," I answered, disappointed at his praising him so readily, "Or rather, I should say, taste altogether."

"No indeed, you are unjust to him," said he. "The proofs he daily gives of good taste may not perhaps strike you so forcibly, but they must be evident to every one else."

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I opened my eyes, I believe to their fullest extent, at this speech; not that I did not understand it, but from him it did surprise me.

"You think me very impertinent," said Mr. Suffield, laughingly, "I see, and have half a mind to quarrel with me, but don't just now, I want to speak to you, and alone too; so just stay here and walk with me."

And with almost as little ceremony as my brother could have used, he drew my hand under his arm, and turned to a broader space of lawn, which allowed room for our footsteps. It was as much as I could do to keep my self-command, and steady the fingers which leant on his arm. He went on in a quiet, grave voice.

"I heard to-day, accidentally, whilst at the bench, that a very celebrated occulist, who had been some time abroad, was just returned to London. We know him to be a most skilful, and also a most excellent man, a perfect gentleman; in short, we think most highly of him. He has performed some wonderful

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cures on cases considered quite hopeless, and —I need not say the rest, need I? What do you think of it?"

"Oh, Mr. Suffield!" I gasped, real sisterly affection swallowing up, in its rushing flood, the minor springs of vanity and fancy, and all slighter emotions; "do you think it possible, is there hope?" I was so agitated, that but for his arm, I could not have stood at all.

"Dear Miss Moore," said he, in an accent of the kindest sympathy, "do not excite yourself so. It is not for me to give an opinion; but do you not think that every means should be tried, which holds out even a shadow of probability."

My hopes faded again as quickly as they had risen, my heart sunk, and with sickening feelings I said:

"Perhaps; but do you know what it is to raise again the thoughts which we have soothed to sleep? Do you know what another disappointment would be to her? The calm of her mind now, has only been won

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after long battling. Once more to give her the same pangs to go through!"

"It is, perhaps, a diffcult question," said he, thoughtfully, and drawing my arm farther through his, as he was speaking, "I do not pretend to judge; but I thought if you knew this, and were to consult with your mother about it, you would decide. I could not so easily speak to your mother myself, lest Grace should find out we had private conferences; and your father is so very excitable on the subject still, that—in short, I preferred telling you."

I am not at all sure that he did not consult me, because he knew how important my voice in the matter would be; but I did not think so then.

I asked him what he knew of this occulist. Then he told me what I had never known before, that he had an elder brother, who had lost his sight in India, from the climate, had undergone much in endeavouring to regain it, and had finally died, from disease contracted

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abroad, just as by the skill of this very physician, he had recovered, in a slight degree, the coveted blessing.

It was a sad story, and explained some things which I had not understood before, but what principally struck me, was the end, the fatal result. Suppose, I thought, this were to happen to Grace! and I suggested, might it not have been the remedies which wore out his strength; did he not die a victim to the cure; and might not Grace suffer in the same way! If she could recover her eye sight, might it not be only to take leave of us for ever.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed he, eagerly, "rather keep her as she is. But, indeed, Miss Moore, the cases are very different; my brother's constitution was completely shattered by hardships he had gone through, and the affection in his eyes was only one symptom of ruined health. Your sister is so different; young, with all the fresh flow of pure, bright life in her, there could not be a

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shadow of such fear. Besides, the physician himself would judge of that; he could tell what her constitution would bear; you are the best judge what her mind can endure. Your sisterly affection will guide you right there."

"I don't know," said I, hesitating as I balanced probabilities in my mind, "I do not feel the courage to give her another disappointment. It seems cruel. If one could only tell what the result would be!"

"There would be no need of self-denial and faith," said he, quietly. "What you have to decide on in this case, I suppose, is whether it is right to use the means put in your power; if so, the result can have nothing to do with it: it may chance to be only an increase of patience and resignation to your sister, and a freedom from self-reproachful regret to yourselves; it may be—what I hardly dare think of," added he, in a voice trembling with emotion—"restoring her, even here, to the blessed light of day."

"But the disappointment!" I sighed again;

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I was too cowardly to take the duty bravely, and trust to the result being a blessing, whatever shape it took.

"I think you do your sister's strength of mind injustice," said he. "I feel convinced that with her patience and sweetness, she would bear it bravely, be it what it might. Indeed, my dear Miss Moore, I believe most firmly myself, that if it is a right thing to do at all, and it is only undertaken in a right spirit, a spirit of submission and trustful love, we shall have no reason to regret the trial, even though it should not please an All-wise and All-merciful God to grant us our wishes. Think about it in this point of view, and you will not find your courage fail. Now is it not getting late for you to be out? The sun has been set some time; you had better go in."

It was indeed rapidly growing dark.

"You will come in with me?"

"No, I have an engagement, and must go home."

"Then let me thank you for your kindness.

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There is nothing I feel more deeply, more gratefully, than concern for Grace! You would not give me greater pleasure, than by doing her good."

"I know that," said he, in a voice whose tones made me long to see his face; "and none I would so gladly give you. It is this feeling which forms the strong tie of sympathy between us; for with all the caprices of a spoilt beauty and an heiress, to your sister you are still a true, unselfish, loving woman; good night." He grasped my hand warmly and left me on the door-step.

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CHAPTER VIII.

BERTHA.
"I wonder if this is the wolf that ate
Little Red Riding Hood?"

URSULA.
"Oh no,
That wolf was killed a long time ago."
GOLDEN LEGEND.

THE result of this conversation was, so far as Grace was concerned, a determination, after due consideration of the matter, to take her to London, and place her under Dr. Grierson's care. At first it was proposed that we should all go; but there were several reasons to make another plan more eligible, and it was finally decided that only my mother should accompany Grace, and that they should be domesticated in Dr. Grierson's own house.

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I hate medical details in a book, and shall therefore only say that the doctor thought the case worth trying, though not very sanguine, and that his system would require time, patience, and extreme quiet.

But the impression left by this conversation on me must not be quite passed over. I no longer doubted the affection of St. John; it seemed to me now a settled thing, and the only wonder to my mind was, that after speaking so very painly as I thought, after appearing to assume such a degree of understanding existing between us, he should not have put the question beyond a doubt, and secured my promised faith. I was almost tempted to believe that he thought he had done so already so much did it appear taken for granted on his part that I understood him.

Just before my mother and sister went to town, came the news to us of Stuart's engagement to Marianne Elson, with full particulars to my father of her fortune, and a great deal about business arrangements, relating to

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settlements, which I did not care to understand. I believe Stuart made an advantageous bargain on his part so far as money went, and I will say this for Marianne, that she made him a very good sort of wife; she was very even-tempered and extremely fond of him, so that I do not think he had any reason to complain. And she certainly must have been well satisfied, that at her age and without personal charms, her money had procured her a husband who always treated her well, gave her very much her own way, and left off his most extravagant habits from the time he married. Their *ménage* was always respectable enough, and in later years, I believe, he became as steady as she could possibly desire. She never knew how to dress herself, that used to strike me as her worst point, but I forgave it when we grew older, and was on very good terms with my sister-in-law all her life.

My father was extremely pleased at the marriage; he did not think much of the dis-

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parity of age, and considered Stuart had done very wisely. My mother felt it differently.

She was much affected, even to tears. "Poor Stuart, poor boy; I wish I could have helped this!" Then after a moment's pause, she added, "I had hoped, Henrietta, you would have saved him from the necessity of this!"

"I, mama, how in the world?"

"You will be so rich in two years' time, my dear!"

I was thunderstruck. I had never thought of the possibility; and really for Stuart I would have done a great deal. I could only answer hurriedly, as an excuse:

"Yes, but that does not help now, and Stuart wants immediate assistance. I have nothing yet."

My mother said no more, but I could see that Stuart's marriage was a bitter thought—a sharp thorn always rankling in her mind. I did not know then how a mother loves her child; her first-born son, and feels his welfare her very life and existence.

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It was a very sudden change which a short time effected in our circle; by the end of a week after that dusky walk in the flower-garden on that November evening, my mother and Grace were in London. Emily Dering had left the village for an indefinite time; the whole family of Suffields too were preparing to move, the ladies were going to Bath. Mr. Suffield wanted to go to his estate in Dorsetshire; and as Stuart was absent also, our domestic party was likely to be very small, and had not much prospect of being enlivened by visitors as it used to be.

St. John did not indeed intend to remain very long in Dorsetshire, that was some comfort; but even were he to return to the Grange, we could not have the same unrestricted and constant intercourse, there would be no reason for the morning visits, and no excuse for my going to the Grange; in short I must, I felt, put things on a different footing, unless St. John would give himself the right of unlimited daily visits by declaring himself my lover.

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Why he should hestitate I could not understand, for although there was a restriction on my marrying before twenty-three, there was none on my being engaged, and he was so very sorry to leave us, and expressed such haste to return from the banishment in Dorsetshire, to the more friendly regions of Fairy Hill, that I could not doubt his feelings.

He made me tell him with great particularity the effect which hope had on the mind of Grace, and how we had broken it to her; and entered with a warm, even a passionate, interest into my doubts and fears. There could be no question of his sympathy, and when I said what a comfort it was to converse with one, who could so fully feel with us, he admitted that it was for this very reason he should rejoice at once more finding himself with me.

At last, from something which he said, it occurred to me that perhaps he was now only waiting to know the result to Grace, and that his hesitation arose from unwillingness to ask

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me to leave her in her helpless state; at least until the question seemed finally decided one way or other. This idea was an inexpressible relief to my mind, and I determined to rest on this assurance and wait patiently for the issue.

Whilst St. John was with me, putting everything before me in a right point of view, and giving me credit for much higher motives than I could justly claim, I forgot many of my idle and foolish fancies; but when he left me, I sank down rapidly from a tolerably sensible and unselfish woman into a vain, capricious and worldly-minded girl.

I had hitherto forgotten to ask what my father had said to Mrs. Dering to drive Emily so completely from the country. I repaired the omission the first opportunity. He did not seem very willing to tell me, but I was importunate, and at last extracted from him, that he had taken an opportunity, after discussing some improvements to the cottage, of observing that at present his means were much circumscribed, that he feared his younger

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children would be far less rich than was generally supposed; that Edward in particular had but poor prospects unless he altered very much, as he was too idle and too extravagant to become rich by his profession, and that he would probably have to follow his brother's example, and marry the wealth he could not otherwise attain.

In short, he had made it as clear as possible that Emily Dering must not think of him, and the result in the wounded feelings of both mother and daughter, I was already acquainted with.

I do not believe I felt real compassion for either of them; I wished the affair had never happened, but I did not see any other course which could be pursued; it was evidently the best thing for all parties. Edward looked gloomy, uneasy, and anxious, but I was not in his confidence; perhaps he knew me too well to expect anything but opposition from my ambition and regard for money.

One day, however, he asked me if I knew

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how long Miss Dering would be away, and when I said that it seemed to be quite uncertain, he expressed such surprize and impatience at people's not knowing their own minds, that I said laughingly, that this was no uncommon circumstance, since I believed I had a brother who did not at all know when he should go to London to study; whereupon he told me abruptly that I was mistaken, for he was going to London next day, to be near my mother and Grace, and the next day he went, leaving my father and me to the chances of a duet, morning, noon, and night.

My father had his country business to attend to, farms, and bench duties, and things of that sort, and used to trot off every day on his pony, to one quarter or other of his territories, whilst I seemed to have no other resource but confidential interviews with the Mentesi, and, I am ashamed to say, flirtations with Captain Ormond.

Yes, so it was; all my better feelings seemed to have gone with Grace and St.

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John. I was idle, I was vain, and the strong restraint which the wish for Mr. Suffield's good opinion had hitherto exercised, was removed with his presence. Captain Ormond flattered and amused me; I laughed at him openly, and he laughed with me. I was capricious as the wind towards him; sometimes almost repelling, but then at others I was soft and mild enough to encourage a more modest man, so that he continued his attentions with spirit and perseverance. My only fear was a regular declaration, but I fancy he was for a long time too uncertain to venture on such a measure, which he must have seen was more likely to kill all hope, than to put an end to fear. I suppose he thought he should win me by perseverance. I do not think he had any very deep-laid scheme, nor am I sure that the ardour of his passion would have held out so long, had not there been the golden prospect of the future.

My method of spending my time was this. After breakfast I used to indulge in reading

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for an hour or two, and then walk down to Laurel Cottage: the first few days I remained all the morning there, and returning about four o'clock in the dusk, fell in with Captain Ormond, who accompanied me home, and lingering until my father's appearance, was forthwith invited to stay to dinner. But I effected a change by and bye. I actually carried Caterina home with me one morning, to spend the day at Fairy Hill, overruling all her mother's hesitating objections, by my affectionate pertinacity; and triumphing greatly in the pleasure I thus procured the lively young Italian, who clapped her hands, and danced about, and embraced me enthusiastically when her mother gave her consent.

Safe at Fairy Hill with my prize, my first amusement was to take her all over the house, which although nothing compared to the Grange for grandeur, was a good specimen of an English gentleman's dwelling, and probably very different from anything she had ever seen. She was most pleasantly struck

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and charmed with its elegance and comfort, and especially delighted with my rooms, which I believe were the best in the house, and which she enthusiastically declared were just like me! Everything of mine she admired ecstatically, my jewels, my books, my wardrobe; laughingly she examined all, saying half apologetically, half funnily, that to an Italian all these arrangements of English comfort and English taste were like new specimens to a natural historian, things to be noted and reflected on.

After we were settled in the drawing-room I made her play and sing to me; the rooms at the cottage were too small for her voice; here it had every advantage, and I seemed first to become aware how very superior it was. She was in the very midst of a grand and thrilling piece, when Captain Ormond entered. I don't know whether she really did not hear him, she appeared not to be aware of his entrance, and I made him a sign to sit down, and keep silence.

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He obeyed, looking extremely surprised, not however at the performance, which he could not appreciate, but at the performer, whom he had never seen before. When she had finished her song, I clapped my hands, and cried,—

"Brava, Caterina, *é superba*," then continuing in her own language, I told her to turn and let me introduce her to '*uno cavaliere.*'

She started up, made a most demure curtsey, and with eyes cast down, came timidly towards me, as if to claim my protection, and began with great diligence to work on my embroidery.

"You may advance, and are at liberty to speak now," said I meanwhile to the visitor, "what brings you here at this hour? If you have a sufficient reason, say it and stay; if not, say it and go."

"I trust I may stay and not say it," said he, coming close to my *bergère*, "for though I have a very excellent reason for my visit, it

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is best unsaid. I hope I have not frightened that lady from the piano!"

"Yes, you have: we are not all so bold as you are; and it requires no small degree of hardihood to remain at the instrument when you are by."

"Miss Moore!"

"Well—Caterina carissima, I wish you could hear this gentleman's music; it is something most striking when he condescends to perform. His execution is tremendous, and the effect on my feelings was such, that I shall never forget it. The emotion thrilled to my finger's ends, and was only too powerful to bear much repetition. I was unequal for many days to make any attempts at playing myself after it."

"He looks very powerful," replied Caterina demurely, with that peculiar glance of hers from under her eyelids, which I think now is often indicative of the reverse of modesty.

"Do not believe her," cried Captain Ormond to Mademoiselle Mentesi," she is quiz-

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zing us both. Do you know what that means?"

"If I do not, I daresay Miss Moore will explain," answered she, moving a little more behind me, and looking shy and distressed.

"I daresay she will," exclaimed he laughing, "no body can explain it better by word or deed, she will make you understand from experience."

"I beg your pardon, Captain Ormond, the signorina is my *friend*," I interposed with emphasis.

"And so is exempt," whispered he, "I do not envy her then."

I turned to Caterina and asked in Italian why she was frightened, to which she answered in the same tongue, that she was not used to see strangers without her mother's protection. I was telling her she need not mind, when our companion interposed.

"I really must protest against your talking in that language, of which I don't understand

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a word, it is too hard on a poor ignoramus like me. Do speak English."

"I was explaining to Mademoiselle Mentesi what you meant by quizzing, and she says she thinks it is a vulgarity, not fit to be mentioned to ladies. But you must excuse her foreign fancies."

"Then you must have given her a false notion; let me see if I cannot make a better explanation in English. Quizzing, Mademoiselle Mentesi, is the ridicule with which those who are beautiful, graceful, and witty, treat all such unfortunate wights as are not equally blessed in these particulars."

"*Mais cela ne se fait pas*—it would be wicked!" cried Caterina, with a look of horror, "to laugh at misfortunes which cannot be helped."

"There, you have shocked Mademoiselle Mentesi's mind by your slander on your country-people. She protests it is impossible and she knows the English better."

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"I only know Miss Moore," said she, with a look of innocent simplicity.

"Besides, he gives an incorrect definition," I added; "quizzing means mis-leading foreigners or strangers by false information, and then laughing at them for believing you."

Captain Ormond laughed and denied; and we carried on the same style of conversation, until luncheon time, the gentleman making no offer to go away, and I too glad of the amusement, to wish to dismiss him.

However, I observed that he took a great deal of interest in talking to Caterina, and drawing her out, in spite of her shyness; she was very quiet and demure, yet every now and then saying things with an air of simplicity, certainly, but with such a decided application to the point, that I could hardly believe she was as unconscious of their effect as she appeared to be.

Indeed she seemed to understand the mo-

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tives of Captain Ormond's attentions almost as well as I did I could see plainly enough. I thought that he wanted to excite my jealousy, and that his notice of Caterina was all a feint; there was a peculiar manner of glancing round to find how I bore it, when he became very complimentary to her, which could not escape my observation. It amused me very much, and I diverted myself by the idea that I perfectly understood his manœuvres, and could control or punish him as I pleased.

After luncheon we went out; I wanted to show Caterina some of the grounds round the Grange, and as the family were all away, there was no restriction on our going there. We spent the whole afternoon walking about together, and it was not till the dusk was drawing on, that I consigned Caterina once more to her mother, extracting from her first a promise that she would come up to me again on the morrow, at twelve o'clock, precisely.

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I then wished Captain Ormond good-night; but he declared he must see me safe home; it was late, dark, damp, and cold, and he really could not leave me. But I was wilful, protesting his company was no charm against dampness or cold, and announcing in so peremptory a way, that I chose to walk home by myself, that he had no resource but submission.

The next morning I was not at all surprised to find Captain Ormond arrive in company with Caterina; I had rather expected some move of this kind, and was diverted to discover how well I had guessed the event. I thanked him most graciously for bringing me my friend, and declared that such obliging conduct really deserved a reward. I would, I told him, have asked him to stay, had I not resolved to take a drive with Mademoiselle Mentesi, whilst the day was fine, so I must trouble him to ring the bell, and I should defer to some other opportunity, the expressions of gratitude his kindness elicited.

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I ordered my pony carriage round as soon as possible, in such a tone as left him no alternative but to take leave, whilst I lamented the necessity, and expressed my regret at his going, with a sweetness which perfectly bewildered him. He did not know how to take it.

When we were alone, Caterina said:

"It was not wrong of me, I hope, you are not angry at my letting him walk with me."

"Angry, dear me, no. One thinks nothing of that in England."

"I understand him very well," laughed she, "though he thinks I don't. When he talks to me, and says fine flattering things, I know they are not said to please Caterina Mentesi, for whom he cares not a straw; but to pique Miss Moore, with whom he is in love to desperation. I see. I know!"

"You cunning child; however, I am glad you are not taken in by him; though, to tell you the truth, Caterina, you should be hear-

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tily welcome to all his love, I only value the fun of laughing at him."

"But, Miss Moore, do not talk of him now, I have something to tell you. We have heard to-day from my brother; he has promised to come to England to see us. You will not refuse to know him, will you?"

I protested that I longed very much to see her brother, and hoped we should be friends.

"There will at least be that advantage," I observed, "your brother's profession will allow me to make a friend of him, without risk of misunderstanding, for you know, Caterina, with my fortune, and at my age, I cannot be good friends with gentlemen here, without their immediately supposing I am falling in love with them, and that I want to be admired in return. It is really quite a misfortune to be an heiress and a beauty.

"A misfortune which brings its own alleviations," said she merrily, "when it enables you to have such a charming equipage as this,

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such an admirer as Captain Ormond, or such a lover as Mr. Suffield," she added, in a whisper, but I made no answer, so she talked of other things.

Several days passed much in the same way. We were together a great part of the day; the captain could only hope to see Caterina, if that was his object, at Fairy Hill, or on her way there, for he had no admission to Laurel Cottage. I found he constantly walked up with her, although she did not come at any regular hour, and I became a little curious to know what was the subject of their conversations, and what was to be the end of it all. I did not think he quite knew his own mind at that time, and though by no means wishing him to make a positive declaration, for it would have been dull to have been obliged to send him away, I was not perfectly satisfied either with the turn affairs seemed taking.

One day I asked Caterina what they talked about when they walked together.

She came up to me, put both her hands on

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my shoulders, looked me full in the face, with her brightest smile, and said:—

"He talks of you, *mia bella*—of what else would he talk?"

"Well what does he say?" asked I, in an indifferent tone.

"He says you are cold, and do not care for him; that he thinks you laugh at his love; that he is wasting his time in courting you, and that he will draw back, and leave you."

"I hope you told him you were sure he would be very welcome," said I, scornfully. "Henrietta Moore is not so ill-provided as to be anxious to keep such an admirer as Captain Ormond."

"I did not know what to say, for I was sorry for him, but I told him brave men were not daunted by a little rebuff; and that he never would win you if he gave up trying."

"And what then, Caterina?" said I, curious in spite of myself.

"He said he was jealous of your regard for Mr. Suffield, but he did not think Mr. Suffield

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cared for you; how men mistake each other, and women too!"

I turned away with hot cheeks and a throbbing heart. Could it be possible that he had thought and said this? I did not believe men were so apt to mistake each other as women sometimes think; accustomed to hear my brothers talk, I had rather a high idea of their general penetration, although Captain Ormond individually was not one whose judgment I respected.

"What did you tell him?" said I, when I recovered my composure enough to turn round. Caterina had her back to me, but I was not sure that she was not watching me in a glass.

"I said that you were not the woman to love without your love being sought, that you were as little likely to love lightly as to love in vain. Was not that right, dear Miss Moore?"

"And then?"

"Oh! I said that the most absolute devo-

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tion would be required by you, before you would part with your liberty, and that I thought very likely you would never find any one good enough to be your equal. Rich, beautiful, clever, and accomplished, a duke or an earl would not be too grand a match for you!"

"I think very likely I shall never marry at all," said I, as carelessly as I could.

"It is curious you should say that," replied she laughing, "it is the very answer Captain Ormond made me; he said it often happened that young ladies, insolent from beauty, refused their equals, because they were ambitious of rank and lived to repent their vanity in single old age. Is that true? In our country a woman would go into a convent if she did not marry; what do they do in yours?"

"Grow tiresome and disagreeable in society," said I, half pettishly, "and let all the world see their disappointment. But, Caterina, that will not be my fate, I have money as well as beauty, and shall be able to marry when I

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please, let Captain Ormond say what he likes."

I own I felt very spiteful towards him after this communication, but I took good care not to show it. On the contrary, I was more amiable than usual; in the highest spirits, and trying to make it quite evident that there was nothing in the present state of things to disturb my equanimity.

One day, about a week or ten days after Edward had left us, Caterina did not come before luncheon, nor did Captain Ormond make his appearance either. I was surprised, and wanting some amusement, I hastily threw on my bonnet and shawl, and ran down to Laurel Cottage. I had just put my hand on the door handle, when the door opened and I stood *vis-à-vis* to a gentleman, a stranger. But stranger though he was, a glance was enough to tell me who he must be, and how he came there. It was Caterina's brother, the priest, who was before me; there could be no mistake in that.

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He bowed gracefully, held open the door for me to pass, and then saying something about showing me the way, turned back and led me into the sitting-room. After the first momentary look I had withdrawn my eyes, for I felt his were surveying me with a keen, quick scrutiny, which brought the colour to my cheeks, deeper even than the sharp atmosphere and the hasty run had left it. I had heard so much of this brother, this Teodoro, so much of his talents, his devotion, and his many virtues, that I felt abashed before him, as if I thought he would know at once how vain and foolish I was, and would read all my thoughts and wishes at one glance from those penetrating eyes.

On joining his mother and sister we were properly introduced, and I told Caterina, now I saw the reason why she had not come to me I forgave her, but that I had come to know if anything were the matter. She said she had been going to send me a note, but that Teodoro had arrived so unexpectedly,

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that she had not been able to give me due notice; but now, would I not stay? Was I in a hurry to go back; for I had not sat down and was preparing to take leave again. I spoke of intruding on a family meeting, and though earnestly pressed by both mother and daughter, I was firm to my resolution, and insisted on returning directly.

The brother again opened the door for me, and accompanied me down the gravel path to hold back the wicket gate, taking leave with a bow, which for grace and courtesy was unequalled in my experience. I turned away, and almost ran against Captain Ormond, who must have been watching us through a gap in the laurel hedge, although I did not see him till I was on the road.

He asked if I were going home, and whether he might go with me, to which I assented. I could see he was fidgetty and uneasy, and I wanted to know whether he had observed the stranger. Of course he had, and was burning with curiosity to know who he was. As I

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could not quite determine whether this curiosity came from interest in Caterina or me, I trifled with it some time before I admitted that he was Madame Mentesi's son.

"Oh! the priest," said he in a satisfied tone; but then, after a moment's thought, he added, "but, Miss Moore, I don't like those fellows for all that."

"I am afraid I do not quite understand you," I replied. "Is that the way you speak of the ladies Mentesi?"

"Priests, I mean; and Italian priests in particular. They are artful and designing, cunning and revengeful; they stick at nothing to gain their ends, truth or falsehood is all one to them."

"Would you like me to tell Mademoiselle Mentesi what you say?" asked I archly, and smiling as I turned my face towards him.

"No," said he, "because it would perhaps hurt her feelings, and I don't want to do that."

"Of course not," interposed I, with the same mocking smile.

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"Because she is a girl, and may be a good enough one after all," continued he, without minding me at all. "He's her brother, and they are all in the same boat as to religion, and I daresay he will do *her* no harm."

"Oh, you are afraid he will corrupt your principles, are you? It is very conscientious of you I declare. I recommend you by all means to keep out of his way then."

"Do you know," said he, lowering his voice, "I have something I want to say to you, Miss Moore, if you will not be angry."

"I most likely shall," was my laughing answer, "and I am a terrible creature then."

"Well then I must just risk your anger, that's all, for I must say it."

He stopped and cleared his throat, and thinking a profession of attachment was coming, I said rather hurriedly:

"I have not a notion of what you can have to say to *me*."

"No, I believe you there; but I only say

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it for your good." I felt a little astonished at this benevolent intimation, but after a momentary hesitation he went on, "I don't quite trust Miss Caterina, and I would advise you not either. There!"

I was so surprised that I stopped short and looked at him in silence.

"I've seen a good deal of her," added he "going and coming, and somehow there is something I don't like—a want of openness—a mystery—I cannot tell what, but I don't like her."

"That's a pity," I observed with mock gravity."

"You see, Miss Moore, it was for your sake I tried to see through her; anyone you care for must interest me, and I thought perhaps —but, indeed, I don't think she's quite honest and sincere."

"I will trouble you to remember that she is my particular friend," said I haughtily. I could have borne to have Caterina abused so

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far as my affection was concerned, but I knew I was in her power, and my pride revolted at the notion of being imposed on.

"I am sorry for it," said he mournfully, "and very sorry to provoke you, Miss Moore; you must feel that I would not do that willingly. Are you very angry?"

There was something so comic in his air of mingled awkward anxiety and honest regret, that I could not keep my countenance; I believe I smiled a little in spite of myself.

"I dare say I am not half so angry with you as I ought to be for traducing my friend, but unless you can tell me some positive proof of insincerity on her part, you must be satisfied by my forgiveness, in consideration of your motive, and not expect belief also on my part."

"And I cannot; only I don't think she talked to you exactly as she talked to me, and some little things besides, which I can't explain. And now if her brother comes too, and he an Italian priest—oh, Miss Moore, do take

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care of yourself; I do believe they are conspiring against you!"

I laughed heartily at the idea, which I thought a very funny one; but on the whole I was pleased with the conversation, not that I believed a word he said against Caterina, I had too much dependence on my own judgment for that: but that I was gratified to find that he was not inconstant, and that I had not been mistaken in my belief in his admiration.

Presently he asked me a little abruptly, but that was his way, and I rather think a mark of feeling, how my sister was going on?

I told him we had heard that morning, and that as yet the occulist could form no definite opinion as to the probability of success. He had not got farther than the preparations which were necessary preliminaries to his measures.

"And I suppose," said he, quietly, yet I think his tone denoted he was making an experiment, "that St. John Suffield is lingering in London to be near her."

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"Mr. Suffield! no, indeed; I imagine he is in Dorsetshire," was my answer, slightly startled at the observation, and yet fully supposing it a mistake.

"No, I happen to know that he is in town," replied Captain Ormond, "I thought you would have been aware of it too. My cousin heard from him this morning, and he wrote from his club."

"Oh!" I paused a little. "Did he tell you any news? It would be very welcome; we are miserably dull here I think."

"Not that I know of, it was a letter on some parish business, I believe; some of Martin's disagreements with the farmers or churchwardens. I did not concern myself about the particulars, but I know Suffield was in town, and meant to stay a day or two longer."

"Oh, and then?"

"I believe he will come here then," replied Captain Ormond, facing round as he opened

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the gate for me, and I could not but suspect trying to see by my face what I felt.

I did not at all admire this sort of scrutiny, and was only saved from making some pettish display of my feelings, in my usual unguarded way, by the appearance of my father, who just then came round from the stables.

He said he was going to drive to Buryton, a town about six miles off, and asked if I would go with him; it was about some furniture, respecting which my mother was anxious for my opinion, and, as I had nothing else to do, I was glad enough to agree to the proposal.

I do not know what possessed my father at the moment, but he asked Captain Ormond to go with us; and invited him meanwhile to come in and take some luncheon. He looked at me with a half dubious expression, but accepted the invitation with alacrity when he found I made no objection, and at that moment I was too much engrossed with other

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feelings to know exactly what I said or wished. St. John coming back! The thought startled me like a sudden wakening from a dream, or perhaps as the news of the master's return might scare the idle school boy amidst his mischievous frolics.

The question immediately presented itself, what would St. John say, or rather, what would he think, when he found how far I had allowed my idle vanity to lead me in the encouragement given to Captain Ormond; how wrong he would think me, he who had probably never seen a feminine weakness in his mother, and who judged other women by her high standard. Whatever palliations I might have offered to myself for my conduct, I could not expect the same from him, he would see and measure with his own eyes, not mine, and what would he think?

There seemed to me only two alternatives, neither of which quite pleased me, and yet I could suggest no other. One was to draw Captain Ormond at once into a declaration,

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and so put an end to his suit, and perhaps get rid of him from the neighbourhood. The other was at once and completely to send him to coventry, and without any reference to the past, or any concern for appearances cut short our intimacy, as if I had only just awakened to a perception of what he intended and wished.

I hesitated as I put on my bonnet and completed my preparations for the drive, as to which course I should adopt, and finally, without making up my mind, left the matter to chance to decide. My father drove himself, so Captain Ormond was indulged with the felicity of a *tête-à-tête* with me, and I half expected an immediate catastrophe. But luckily he did not make a declaration then and there —I say luckily, because I think now it would have been uncommonly awkward to have to take a long drive with a man whom one had just refused; but at the time I believe I was so very impatient that I actually wished he would speak out.

He was in good spirits and talked a great

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deal, and in the bewilderment and worry of my feelings, I was particularly thoughtless and lively outwardly; most gracious and encouraging, so much so that I wondered he had not seized the opportunity for an explanation. We were back very late, only just in time to make our toilettes for dinner, and when we met round the table, and indeed all the evening, the same manners were kept up between us. My father, as usual, slept a good deal by the fire, and we two talked and laughed over the piano and the tea table, but still nothing came; and when he took leave at night, he left me with a most uncomfortable conviction that I had made matters a great deal worse than they were before, for I had extended to him encouragement which my intentions entirely belied, and now he would have every reason in the world to think himself extremely ill-used, unless I accepted his hand when he was pleased to offer it.

END OF VOL. I.

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